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Study No. 54

THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD: A BIOGRAPHY

By HENRY THEW STEPHENSON, Professor of English in  
Indiana University

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By HENRY THEW STEPHENSON, Professor of English in  
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## Contents

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CHAPTER	PAGE
1. YOUTH OF THE ETRICK SHEPHERD . . . . .	7
2. <i>The Pastorals</i> AND <i>The Mountain Bard</i> . . . . .	23
3. THE ETRICK SHEPHERD . . . . .	35
4. RESIDENCE IN EDINBURGH . . . . .	46
5. LIFE AT ALTRIVE LAKE . . . . .	56
6. <i>The Poetic Mirror</i> , ETC . . . . .	63
7. RELATIONS WITH BLACKWOOD AND WILSON . . . . .	76
8. HOGG AS A PROSE WRITER . . . . .	85
9. LAST YEARS . . . . .	101

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## Preface

THE present writer has been asked the question whether the biography of the Ettrick Shepherd is worth the writing. The answer, of course, is evident: yes, if it is worth the reading. But whether a new biography is needed is another question. The Ettrick Shepherd is a name that has dropped out of popular knowledge in just about the same proportion as has the name of the *Noctes Ambrosianae*. Sixty years ago everyone was familiar with the poetry and prose of Hogg, and there are signs of a renewal of interest in his work. Even today his songs are sung in the Ettrick Forest with unabated pleasure, and the folk are familiar with his tales.

There is at the present time no satisfactory sketch of Hogg's life in print. The interesting *Memoir* by Mrs. Garden makes no pretense to be other than a daughter's loving tribute to her father. The biography in "The Famous Scots Series" is in parts not wholly accurate. The more notable life by Thomson, prefixed to Blackie's edition of Hogg's poems, now long out of print, is, like the others, inaccurate thru having accepted as fact a composition that is largely fiction.

Hogg wrote an autobiography that is true to fact in the main but which contains innumerable errors due to a playful but wilful exaggeration, and to lapses of memory. So far as the present writer knows, no biographer has taken the trouble to investigate the facts contained in the *Autobiography*, much less to note the unsigned and original draft, that differed so much in detail, and that appeared in the *Old Scots' Magazine*. It has been the present writer's pleasant task to search out many details that put the story of Hogg's life, in parts, in a new light.

In perusing these three biographies of Hogg the reader is struck with the fact that none of them deals with him as a literary artist. The fact that he wrote, and what he wrote, seems to be important, but the quality and character of what he wrote is quite neglected. In the following pages some notice of this aspect of his life is taken.

A word of justification may be necessary concerning several extracts of length from *The Spy* and the *Lay Sermons*. There

are accessible now several editions of Hogg's works, prose and verse; but in none of them is any notice taken of his compositions in the nature of the essay. *The Spy* and the *Sermons* are not to be obtained. The extracts are inserted mainly to serve as illustrations of Hogg's style of writing other than verse or prose fiction.

HENRY THEW STEPHENSON.

Indiana University, March, 1922.

## Chronological Note

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- 1770.....born November(?) 25.
- 1770-1776..resided at Ettrickhall.
- 1776-1785..served under various masters in the neighborhood, the last of whom was Mr. Scott, of Singlee.
- 1785-1787..occupied the position of man-of-all-work on the farm of Mr. Laidlaw, at Elibank.
- 1788-1790..obtained full qualification of shepherd under Mr. Laidlaw, of Willanslee.
- 1790-1800..shepherd under Mr. Laidlaw, of Blackhouse, on the Douglas Burn in the valley of Yarrow.
- 1793.....first trip to the Highlands.
- 1794.....*The Mistakes of a Night*, his first publication.
- 1797.....first heard of Burns.
- 1800-1804..resided at Ettrickhall.
- 1801.....publication of *The Pastorals*.
- 1804-1807..resided at Mitchel-Slack as shepherd.
- 1807.....publication of *The Mountain Bard* and *The Shepherd's Guide*.
- 1807-1810..residence in Dumfriesshire.
- 1810-1815..residence in Edinburgh.
- 1810.....publication of *The Forest Minstrel*.
- 1810-1811..editor of *The Spy*.
- 1813.....publication of *The Queen's Wake*.
- 1815-1822..residence at Altrive Lake.
- 1815.....publication of *The Pilgrims of the Sun*.
- 1816.....publication of *Mador of the Moor*.
- 1816.....publication of *The Poetic Mirror*.
- 1817.....publication of *Dramatic Tales*.
- 1818.....publication of *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* and other tales.
- 1818.....publication of *The Long Pack*.
- 1819-1821..publication of *The Jacobite Relics*.
- 1820.....marriage.
- 1820.....publication of *The Winter Evening Tales*.
- 1822-1829..residence at Mt. Benger.
- 1822.....publication of *The Siege of Roxburg*, *Poems*, in four volumes, and *The Royal Jubilee*.
- 1823.....publication of *The Three Perils of Woman*.
- 1824.....publication of *The Confessions of a Fanatic*.
- 1825.....publication of *Queen Hynde*.
- 1829.....publication of *The Shepherd's Calendar*.
- 1829-1835..residence at Altrive.
- 1831.....publication of *Songs*.

- 1832.....publication of *Altrive Tales*, Vol. 1, *A Quacer Book*, and *The Domestic Life of Scott*.  
1834.....publication of *Lay Sermons*.  
1835.....publication of *Tales of the Wars of Montrose*.  
1835.....died November 21.



# The Ettrick Shepherd: A Biography

By HENRY THEW STEPHENSON, *Professor of English in Indiana University*

## CHAPTER I

### YOUTH OF THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD

PERHAPS no man's character has ever been so much the offspring of environment and heredity as that of the Ettrick Shepherd. The bald, green hills of Ettrick; Lone St. Mary's Loch with its hillside church so closely linked to the history of Sir William Wallace; the Yarrow—source of poetic inspiration for centuries; the lonely life of a shepherd on the Border hills in the bleak winter when he takes his life in his hands on behalf of his flock, or during the soft summer when he is alone upon the braes with nature for days and weeks at a time—all this tells half the story of the Shepherd's genius. And heredity tells the rest, for of education he had none.

Of his father, Robert Hogg, little need be said. In later life the poet loved to trace his family to some bold North Sea rover by the name of Haug. Suffice it to say here that all such connection is wholly fancy-born.<sup>1</sup> The Hoggs for generations had been shepherds in the Ettrick Valley. Robert Hogg had so far risen above his forbears as to become a tenant farmer on a small scale, a social rank, however, which he was unable to maintain; and while the poet was but a tiny lad the farmer returned once more to his former occupation. Robert Hogg was a plain, honest, sober shepherd, and his tale is told.

It was from the maternal side that James Hogg received whatever of his character is due to heredity. In the secluded churchyard of Ettrick Kirk the grave of his mother's father is marked by the following inscription:

Here lyeth William Laidlaw, the far-famed Will o' Phaup, who for feats of Frolic, Agility and Strength Had no Equal in his day; He was born at Craik A.D. 1691, And died in the 84th year of his age.

<sup>1</sup> In shepherd's parlance a hog is a young sheep that has not yet been shorn.

Laidlaw is an old name in that country, and the William of the above inscription a man of such local note that the following quotations might find place here even if they were not inserted because they body forth so truly the boisterous, athletic shepherd who used to distinguish himself at the St. Ronan's games, and the poet who eclipsed even Sir Walter Scott as one who portrayed the supernatural lore pertaining to the country of his birth.

Will o' Phaup, one of the genuine Laidlaws of Craik, was born in that place in 1691. He was shepherd in Phaup for fifty-five years. For feats of frolic, strength, and agility he had no equal in his day. In the hall of the laird, at the farmer's ingle, and in the shepherd's cot, Will was alike a welcome guest; and in whatever company he was, he kept the whole in one roar of merriment. In Will's days, brandy was the common drink in this country; as for whisky, it was, like silver in the days of Solomon, nothing accounted of. Good black French brandy was the constant beverage; and a heavy neighbor Will was on it. Many a hard bouse he had about Moffat, and many a race he ran, generally for wagers of so many pints of brandy; and in all his life he never was beaten.<sup>2</sup>

Hogg himself wrote so much about the fairies, and wrote so earnestly, that, tho he sometimes doubts, he is more often sincere, and we cannot fail to attribute to him far more than the average belief in the folklore of the supernatural. He relates many anecdotes of his grandfather, but considers him most noteworthy because he was the last inhabitant of the Ettrick Valley who held personal intercourse with the fairy folk. He thus describes the incident:

When Will had become a right old man, and was sitting on a little green hillock at the end of his house one evening, resting himself, there came three little boys up to him, all exactly like one another, when the following short dialogue ensued between Will and them:—

"Goode'en t'ye, Will Laidlaw."

"Goode'en t'ye, creatures. Whare ir ye gaun this gate?"

"Can ye gie us up-putting for the night?"

"I think three siccan bits of shreds o' hurchins winna be ill to put up. Where came ye frae?"

"Frae a place that ye dinna ken. But we are come on a commission to you."

"Come away in, then, and tak sic cheer as we hae."

Will rose and led the way into the house, and the little boys followed; and as he went he said carelessly without looking back, "What's your commission to me, bairns?" He thought they might be the sons of some gentleman, who was a guest of his master.

<sup>2</sup> *The Shepherd's Calendar*, Chapter XVIII, Odd Characters.

"We are sent to demand a silver key that is in your possession."

Will was astounded; and standing still to consider of some old transaction, he said, without lifting his eyes from the ground—"A silver key? In God's name, where came ye from?"

There was no answer, on which Will wheeled round, and round, and round; but the tiny beings were all gone and he never saw them more. At the name of God, they vanished in the twinkling of an eye. It is curious that I should never have heard the secret of the silver key, or indeed, whether there was such a thing or not.<sup>3</sup>

Except for his lack of literary genius, Will o' Phaup might sit as model for his grandson's portrait. Let us glance at William's daughter, the mother of the poet.

Margaret Laidlaw, like her son, was a self-taught genius. She lost her mother when she herself was but a child, who, because she was the eldest, was retained at home to take her mother's place and to superintend the household affairs for her father. She saw her younger brothers and sisters growing up under her care, able to enjoy the advantages of school for which she had no time. When but twelve or thirteen years of age, she began to feel the humiliation of their superior knowledge. On Sunday, her only time for rest, she would wander upon the hillsides, alone and dejected. Here, with the Bible under her arm, and, "humbled by a sense of her ignorance she used to throw herself down on the heath and water the page with her bitter tears".<sup>4</sup>

Her afternoons on the hillside, however, were not all spent in tears. From the Bible she taught herself to read, and from it she acquired a love of verse that, as we shall see, led her to encourage her son to memorize the metrical version of the Psalms. She soon became enamored with verse of a very different kind, namely, the ballad-lore of Selkirkshire. From an old wandering minstrel, the last of his race, she learned, it is said, no less than ten thousand lines. She dictated to Scott the ballad of *Auld Maitland* which thus found its way into print for the first time in the pages of the *Minstrelsy*.

She knew also the tales in prose, many of which are to be read in the pages written by her son. She hushed her children to sleep with song and fable, and her native humor made the cottage of Robert Hogg the meeting-place of a famous coterie of shepherds who assembled to hear her tales and

<sup>3</sup> *The Shepherd's Calendar*, Chapter XVIII, Odd Characters.

<sup>4</sup> From an article by Y, "The Life and Writings of James Hogg", in the *Old Scots' Magazine*, January, 1818, page 37.

songs—a coterie famous because doubtless these early scenes gave rise to that inborn taste which at a later date led the Ettrick Shepherd to reproduce the same scenes at his own cottage of Altrive Lake on Yarrow banks, where the places of shepherd swains were taken by such men as "Shirra" Scott, "Willie" Laidlaw, Dominie Russell, and "Christopher North". Says Mrs. Garden:

Robert Hogg, the poet's father, was not a man in any way remarkable. A hard-working shepherd, a well-meaning, well-living man, he had saved a little money, and having married, he came to entertain the wish, and to indulge the very natural ambition of becoming a farmer himself. He accordingly took a lease of the farms of Ettrickhouse and Ettrickhall, residing at the time of our poet's birth at the humble homestead of Ettrickhall. Prosperous for a time, success did not seem to follow his footsteps, and Robert Hogg was compelled to relinquish his farms, and to resume the calling of a shepherd. Mr. Bryden of Crosslea took the farm of Ettrickhouse, and until his own death provided Robert Hogg employment as a shepherd, and his family with a home.<sup>5</sup>

The poet, the second of four sons, was born at Ettrickhall, probably in November or December, 1770. From the hour of his birth, Hogg seems inseparately linked with the fairy folk of whom he sang. His personal friend, Allan Cunningham, thus relates the anecdote:

He was born on the 25th of January, 1772, thirteen years after the birth of Burns; nor was his appearance on the birthday of the poet the only circumstance that marked that something remarkable was given to the world. A midwife was wanted and a timid rider was sent for her, who was afraid to cross the flooded Ettrick; his hesitation was perceived by an elfin spirit—the kindly Brownie of Bodsbeck, who unhorsed the tardy rustic, carried home the midwife with the rapidity of a rocket, and gave a wild shout when the new born poet was shown to the anxious parents.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Page 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Biographical and Critical History of the British Literature of the last Fifty Years*, by Allan Cunningham, 1834.

It will be noticed that this account was published before the death of Hogg, who contradicted neither the facts nor the circumstance narrated in connection with his birth, nor the date, which is incorrect. Hogg was an enthusiastic admirer of Burns, and it was his lifelong wish to emulate his literary hero. Hogg repeatedly asserts that he was born on the above date, and some writers have suggested that he purposely altered the date of his birth to coincide with the anniversary of the birth of Burns. This explanation would not account for the change in year, and any one who is familiar with the Shepherd's character finds it difficult to entertain such a supposition. It is a fact that Hogg was unusually careless about dates. In two family Bibles he recorded the birth of one of his children as occurring in different months. (Mrs. Garden, page 4.) In different editions of his *Autobiography* he mentions inconsistent dates. In another place he mentions something as having occurred in 1801, and immediately afterward

For six years the family led a comfortable life at Ettrick-hall. His brother William writes the following interesting account of these early days:

“He was remarkably fond of hearing stories, and our mother to keep us boys quiet would often tell us tales of kings, giants, knights, fairies, kelpies, brownies, etc., etc. These stories fixed both our eyes and attention, and our mother got forward with her housewifery affairs in a more regular way. She also often repeated to us the metre psalms, and accustomed us to repeat them after her; and I think it was the 122d which Jamie (for I love the words and names used among us at that day) could have said. I think this was before he knew any of the letters. I am certain before he could spell a word. After he could read with fluency, the historical part of the Bible was his chief delight, and no person whom I have been acquainted with knew it so well. If one entered into conversation on that subject, he could with ease have repeated the names of the several Kings of Israel and Judah in succession, with the names of their kingdoms.”

The parish school was close adjoining the cottage at Ettrick-hall and little Jamie was soon introduced as a pupil. As was usual, the Shorter Catechism and the Book of Proverbs were used as textbooks, and James made progress for the short space of two or three months. Then came the crash in the family fortunes.

Hogg writes of his father at the time he took a lease of Ettrickhall:

He then commenced dealing in sheep—bought up great numbers and drove them to the English and Scottish markets; but at length, owing to a great fall in the price of sheep, and the absconding of his principal debtor, he was ruined, became bankrupt, everything was sold by auction, and my parents were turned out of doors without a farthing in the world. I was then in the sixth year of my age, and remember well the distressed and destitute condition that we were in. At length the late worthy Mr. Brydon, of Crosslea, took compassion upon us; and, taking a short lease of the farm of Ettrickhouse, placed my father there as his shepherd, and thus afforded him the means of supporting us for a time.

says that he had already seen Scott's *Minstrelsy* (published in 1802-3). Doubtless Hogg recollected the date of his birth wrong, and never felt impelled to discover the truth.

The parish register records his baptism, December 9, 1770. Ettrickhall was hardly a stone's throw from the church, and there is no reason to believe that the ceremony of baptism was deferred beyond the necessary time. Mrs. Garden guesses November 25 as the day of her father's birth.

It may be noted here that there is an obscurity about a few other dates of his early childhood. In his *Autobiography* he refers to several incidents of which there is no other record as having occurred in such and such a year of his life. Should we reckon from the end of 1770 or from the beginning of 1772? The doubt is nowhere of consequence, and in the following pages no further notice will be taken of the fact.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Mrs. Garden, page 13.

This gentleman continued to interest himself in our welfare till the day of his untimely death, when we lost the best friend that we had in the world.<sup>8</sup>

Hogg was immediately set to work. His employment was that of herding a few cows, and his principal duty was to keep them out of the unfenced fields. His wages for the half-year was a lamb and a pair of shoes. He writes:

Even at that early age my fancy seems to have been a hard neighbor for both judgment and memory. I was wont to strip off my clothes, and run races against time, or rather against myself; and, in the course of these exploits, which I accomplished much to my own admiration, I first lost my plaid, then my bonnet, then my hat, and, finally, my hosen, for, as for shoes, I had none. In that naked state did I herd for several days, till a shepherd and maidservant were sent to the hills to look for them and found them all.<sup>9</sup>

He continued at this employment for half a year when he was returned to school. He now progressed sufficiently in his studies to read the Bible; but hard times compelled him to resume work again at the end of three months. The present

<sup>8</sup> Hogg never forgot the kindness of Mr. Brydon, whose memory he commemorated in *A Dialogue in a Country Churchyard*, which appeared in the *Scottish Pastorals*, Hogg's first published volume. The last word is italicized because many biographers have overlooked the fact that it was not the first of his publications. During several years, even some time before 1800, which the *Autobiography* mentions as the year in which Hogg's first song was published, Hogg had been writing at intervals for the *Scots' Magazine* under the nom de plume of The Ettrick Shepherd.

<sup>9</sup> From the *Autobiography*. Inasmuch as this memoir will be freely quoted in the following pages it is worth while to define its character at the outset. In the preliminary note the writer says: "I like to write about myself. . . . I must again apprise you, that, whenever I have occasions to speak of myself and my performances, I find it impossible to divest myself of an inherent vanity; but, making allowances for that, I will lay before you the outlines of my life—with the circumstances that gave rise to my juvenile pieces, and my own opinion of them as faithfully

As if you were the minister of heaven  
Sent down to search the secret sins of men."

Hogg certainly possessed a very inherent sense of vanity, as well as the gift of exaggeration, and the fault of inaccuracy. Yet there is no reason to believe that he did not try to carry out sincerely the intention couched in the above words. The substance of the early part of the memoir first appeared in the form of three letters to different numbers of the *Scots' Magazine*. It first appeared in connected form as a preface to *The Mountain Bard* in 1807. It was prefixed to several subsequent publications, in each case continued to date. The last appearance during Hogg's lifetime was in 1832 as preface to the twelve-volume edition of the *Altrive Tales*, only one volume of which was ever published. There are contradictions, omissions, and additions encountered in the different editions, and the version that has appeared since his death has had several personal passages "edited" out.

In spite of such details which render the *Autobiography* questionable evidence upon certain subjects, there is sufficient collateral evidence to enable one to use its pages with sufficient satisfaction. In the present volume the writer has introduced references to the *Autobiography* only when satisfied of their authenticity.

biographer, tho an enthusiastic admirer of the Ettrick Shepherd, does not wish to stultify him unduly by placing him upon a pedestal where he cannot sit with grace. But any reader who has softened to that beautiful lyric which begins

Bird of the wilderness  
Blithesome and cumberless  
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea,

or who has wept over the pathetic character of Cherry in *The Three Perils of Woman* should not forget that the writer's whole education was comprised within six months spent at school while but yet a lad of six or seven, or that he taught himself to write at the age of twenty by copying letters from the pages of a printed book.

Hogg's earliest ambition was the humble one of writing verses good enough for the maids to sing at the milking; and he always had a tender spot in his heart for the lasses. He writes the following naïve description of his first introduction to the grand passion:

But that summer, when only eight years of age, I was sent out to a height called Broad-heads with a rosy-checked maiden to herd a flock of new-weaned lambs, and I had my mischievous cows to herd besides. But, as she had no dog and I had an excellent one, I was ordered to keep close to her. Never was a master's order better obeyed. Day after day I herded the cows and the lambs both, and Betty had nothing to do but to sit and sew. Then we dined together every day at a well near to the Shiel-sike head, and after dinner I laid my head down on her lap, covered her bare feet with my plaid and pretended to fall sound asleep. One day I heard her say to herself, "Poor laddie, he's just tired to death", and then I wept till I was afraid she would feel the warm tears trickling on her knee. I wished my master, who was a handsome young man, would fall in love with her and marry her, wondering how he could be so blind and stupid as not to do it. But I thought if I were he, I would know well what to do.<sup>30</sup>

Of the next ten years of his life little need be said. An anecdote told by his brother William shows that James was a delicate child; but he soon outgrew this condition and, like his grandfather, Will o' Phaup, became noted in his manhood for strength and skill in athletic contests. During this period of ten years he served in different capacities under a dozen different masters. He is careful to note that this frequent changing from place to place was not due to a failure to give satisfaction, but to the fact that his increasing age enabled

<sup>30</sup> *Autobiography*.

him to procure a better position and better wages. He never failed to carry a warm recommendation from an old master to a new one.

In 1785 he went to serve a Mr. Scott at Singlee. While here he managed to save five shillings with which he bought a fiddle on which he used to practice at night in the cowhouse. And Mrs. Garden relates how from that time till his death he was never without such an instrument and seldom long without affording himself the pleasure of playing.

From Singlee he went to Elibank on the Tweed below Innerleithan, where he served as a man-of-all-work under Mr. Laidlaw during 1785-7. He then went to Mr. Laidlaw's father at Willanslee, upon whose wild and barren farm he remained till 1790. Here, for the first time in his life, he was employed as a shepherd. The days of his youth were passed, and henceforth he could undertake the responsibilities of a man, and claim a man's remuneration.

One who, to use Hogg's own phrase, "dabbled so much in verse" is likely to show an unusual relish for it at first. Tho true of Hogg in regard to his early liking for the metrical Psalms, it is true no further. He was fortunate in finding at Willanslee a master and mistress who took a kindly interest in his personal welfare. They lent him books and for the first time his literary horizon widened beyond the Bible. But interest in what he read lay wholly on the side of prose.

It was while serving here. . . . that I first got a perusal of the *Life and Adventures of Sir William Wallace*, and the *Gentle Shepherd*. . . . The truth is I made exceedingly slow progress in reading them. The little reading I had learned I had nearly lost, and the Scottish dialect quite confounded me; so that, before I got to the end of a line I had commonly lost the rhyme of the preceeding one; and if I came to a triplet, a thing of which I had no conception, I commonly read to the foot of the page without perceiving that I had lost the rhyme altogether. . . . The late Mrs. Laidlaw of Willanslee took some notice of me, and frequently gave me her books to read while tending the ewes; these were chiefly theological. The only one I remember anything of is Bishop Burnet's *Theory of the Conflagration of the Earth*. Happy it was for me that I did not understand it! for the little of it that I did understand had nearly overturned my brain altogether. . . . Mrs. Laidlaw also sometimes gave me the newspapers which I pored on with great earnestness, beginning at the date and reading straight on, through advertisements of houses and lands, balm of Gilead, and everything; and, after all, was often no wiser than when I began. . . . I was about this time obliged to write a letter to my elder



brother, and, never having drawn a pen for such a number of years, I had actually forgotten how to make sundry letters of the alphabet; these I had either to print, or to patch up the words as best I could."<sup>11</sup>

At Whitsuntide 1790 Hogg left Willanslee and took service under another Laidlaw at Blackhouse on the Douglas Burn, a petty tributary of the Yarrow. For ten years he remained as a shepherd at Blackhouse. It was there that his character was moulded into its final form; it was while there that he first heard of Burns, a fact that gave rise to his life ambition; it was while there that he conquered the mechanical difficulty of writing and began to compose rhymes; and from Blackhouse he sent forth the first songs that appeared in print, winning for the "Ettrick Shepherd" a small measure of local fame.

When he went to Blackhouse in 1790 he was a strong young fellow just on the threshold of manhood, a shepherd with a recommendation but as yet young in experience, ignorant, able to read but slowly and with difficulty, and unable to write at all. As yet he had given no evidence whatever of literary feeling or genius. However, within ten years he had learned to read fluently, to compose with a fair degree of rapidity, and to write on paper with tolerable ease. In addition to this, 1800, the year in which he left Blackhouse, found him the author of *Donald McDonald*, a spirited war song that was ringing over the whole of England and Scotland.

For ten years, beginning with 1790, Hogg herded sheep in the most romantic part of the Border country. This decade is the most significant in his life, not because it marks the beginning of his literary career, for nothing he wrote previous to 1800 is worthy of attention, but because during this period he met the friends who henceforth guided his life, and because the sojourn at Blackhouse converted his character from youthful formlessness to what it afterward became.

The Ettrick and Yarrow valleys trend northeast in nearly parallel lines for a score of miles till they unite in the historic neighborhood of the battlefield of Philiphaugh close to Selkirk. On the Ettrick road, an hour's walk from the latter town still stands the ancient peeltower of Oakwood, the reputed abode of the wizard Michael Scott. As one passes up the winding valley one sees the places that figure in the ballads

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<sup>11</sup> *Autobiography*.

*Young Tamlane* and *Jamie Telfer of the Fair Dodhead*. Kirkhope tower is in sight; and the ruined vault of Tushielaw, where lived Adam Scott, the most famous of the Border raiders, still perches high upon its commanding hill. On one side climbs the road traversed by King James that time he found a grave for Percy Cockburne, when his wife's agony gave its present name to one of the most romantic dells of beauty in the Border. On another side diverges a road towards the famous tower of Branksome; while straight ahead goes the road to Ettrick Kirk where Thomas Boston taught the gospel and wrote the *Fourfold State*.

History, poetry, and legend have left their stamp at every turn; and our shepherd was born in the very midst of all this, used from his cradle days to the outpouring of neighborhood lore by the fireside of his mother's cottage. But, tho Hogg is known far and wide thru Scotland as the Ettrick Shepherd, the real associations of his life are with the sister vale of Yarrow whence he returned to Ettrick only to be borne by others to a quiet grave in the shelter of Boston's church.

A little south of Ettrickhall where the poet was born, a bridle path climbs steeply up the mountain side towards Yarrow. After the highest elevation is reached the path runs level for some distance amid wild and desolate hills. There is no sign of human habitation, no sound of companionship save the occasional bleat of a sheep upon the brae side. Once the lonely traveler can catch a distant glimpse of the King's Road and is likely to wonder how often the poet-shepherd tramped this path and thought of the Scottish king and his swift descent upon the robber king of Tushielaw. Then the path begins to wind and drop between stacks of peat till at last a broad view opens with the swiftness of a breaking storm. The ravine on the left is where the martyr Renwick preached his last sermon among the hills. The white farmhouse far below is the scene of Hogg's most widely read novel, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*. Every spot within sight bears to this day wild tales of Covenanter heroism and Claverhouse's cruelty. The sheet of water to the right is the Loch of the Lowes and the white mark beyond it on the hillside, a gigantic stone figure of the Shepherd close by Tibbie Shiel's.

So far, history and legend have not left our footsteps. Poetry soon resumes its sway. Another mile brings us to St.

Mary's Loch. On the hillside is the yard of St. Mary's church, long since disappeared. From there on down the valley, past "Dryhope's ruined Tower", the Dowie Dens of Yarrow, past Newark, back to Selkirk, every milestone marks the scene of one of those grand old ballads such as *The Gay Goshawk* and *The Outlaw Murray*. Save for a few intervals, the Ettrick Shepherd never escaped the influence of such surroundings, an influence that is to be felt in every page he wrote.

But a short distance down the Yarrow from the loch is the junction of the Douglas Burn, a harmless looking rill in the bottom of a pleasant valley. Yet we know from the article on *Storms* how grim and terrible it could become upon occasion. Three miles up the Douglas Burn stand the ruins of Blackhouse tower, once a possession of the Black Douglas, and on the hillside near are the "standing stones" which, tradition asserts, are the scene of the *Douglas Tragedy*. Here, in the neighboring farmhouse, tenanted by the third Mr. Laidlaw for whom Hogg shepherded, the poet came to live. The farm is almost at the head of the valley in its wildest part, and among these barren hills Hogg shepherded for ten years. During a large part of each year he was more or less alone on the hills for days at a time in company with his sheep. How this nature-communion affected his character can best be told in his own words:

It is almost impossible, also, that a shepherd can be other than a religious character, being so much conversant with the Almighty in his works, in all the goings-on of nature, and in his control of the otherwise resistless elements. He feels himself a dependent being, morning and evening, on the great Ruler of the universe; he holds converse with him in the cloud and storm—on the misty mountain and the darksome waste—in the whirling drift and the overwhelming thaw—and even in the voices and sounds that are only heard by the howling cliff or solitary dell. How can such a man fail to be impressed with the presence of an eternal God, of an omniscient eye, and an almighty arm?<sup>12</sup>

Hogg began his service at Whitsuntide in 1790, and no place in the Border could so well have helped to bring out the poetic element in his nature; for, besides the poetic surroundings, he found in Mr. Laidlaw not only a master but also a friend. He possessed a good library among the books, of which were to be found the writings of Milton, Pope, Thompson, Young, and *The Spectator*. Laidlaw encouraged Hogg to read. The

<sup>12</sup> *The Shepherd's Calendar*, Chapter XVII.

latter's strong mind became rapidly burdened with diversified facts and examples of the best literary expression in the language, details which it tenaciously retained. Before long the difficulties in reading which a short time before had caused him to lose track of the lines in rhyme disappeared altogether. His companionable intercourse with Mr. Laidlaw's son William, Sir Walter Scott's amanuensis, his beloved "Willie" Laidlaw, not only sharpened Hogg's intellectual powers and refined his literary taste, but also eventually procured for him the introduction to Sir Walter Scott upon which depended so much of the Shepherd's future success.

Hogg's personal appearance at this time is well described by his brother William:

Four and fifty years ago when Hogg was nineteen years of age, his face was fair, round, and ruddy, with big blue eyes that beamed with humour, gaiety, and glee. And he was not only then, but throughout his chequered life, blessed with strong health, and the most exuberant animal spirits. His height was a little above the average size, his form at that period was of faultless symmetry, which nature had endowed with almost unequalled agility and swiftness of foot. His head was covered with a singular profusion of light brown hair, which he usually wore coiled up under his hat. When he used to enter church on Sunday (of which he was at all times a regular attendant), after lifting his hat he used to raise his right hand to his hair to assist a shake of the head, when his long hair fell over his loins, and every female eye at least was turned upon him as with a light step he ascended to the gallery, where he usually sat.<sup>13</sup>

For several years Hogg led an uneventful life at Blackhouse. In 1793 he made his first trip to the Highlands, journeying thither in charge of a flock of sheep which he delivered at Strathfillan in Perthshire. 1796 is the year in which his *Autobiography* says that his literary career began.<sup>14</sup>

The first time that I attempted to write verses was in the spring of the year 1796. Mr. Laidlaw, having a number of valuable books, which were all open to my perusal, I about this time began to read with considerable attention—and no sooner did I begin to read so as to understand, than, rather prematurely, I began to write. For several years my compositions consisted wholly of songs and ballads made up for the lasses to sing in chorus; and a proud man I was when I first heard the rosy nymphs chaunting my uncouth strains, and jeering me by the still dearer appellation of "Jamie the poeter".

I had no more difficulty in composing songs then than I have at present; and I was equally well pleased with them. But then the writing

<sup>13</sup> Quoted by Mrs. Garden, page 21.

<sup>14</sup> See page 12.

of them!—that was a job! I had no method of learning to write, save by following the Italian alphabet; and though I always stripped myself of coat and vest when I began to pen a song, yet my wrist took a cramp so I could rarely make above four or six lines at a sitting. Whether my manner of writing it out was new, I know not, but it was not without singularity. Having very little spare time from my flock, which was unruly enough, I folded and stitched a few sheets of paper, which I carried in my pocket. I had no inkhorn; but in place of it I borrowed a small phial which I fixed in a hole in the breast of my waistcoat; and having a cork fastened by a piece of twine, it answered the purpose fully as well. Thus equipped, whenever a leisure minute or two offered, and I had nothing else to do, I sat down and wrote out my thoughts as I found them. This is still my invariable practice in writing prose. I cannot make out one sentence by study, without the pen in my hand to catch the ideas as they arise, and I never write two copies of the same thing.<sup>15</sup>

Nothing illustrates so aptly the isolated life led by the Yarrow shepherds as the fact that Hogg never so much as heard of the existence of Burns till 1797, the year after he died.

One day during that summer a half daft man, named John Scott, came to me on the hill, and to amuse me repeated *Tam O'Shanter*. I was delighted! I was far more than delighted—I was ravished! I cannot describe my feelings; but, in short, before Jock Scott left me, I could recite the poem from beginning to end, and it has been my favorite poem ever since. He told me it was made by one Robert Burns, the sweetest poet that ever was born; but that he was now dead, and his place would never be supplied. He told me all about him, how he was born on the 25th of January, bred a ploughman, how many beautiful songs and poems he had composed, and that he had died last harvest, on the 21st of August.

This formed a new epoch of my life. Every day I pondered on the genius and fate of Burns. I wept, and always thought with myself—what was to hinder me from succeeding Burns, I too was born on the 25th of January,<sup>16</sup> and I have much more time to read and compose than any ploughman could have, and can sing more old songs than ever ploughman could in the world. But then I wept again because I could not write. However, I resolved to be a poet, and to follow in the steps of Burns.<sup>17</sup>

Hogg, of course, never equalled Burns as a poet, but, considering the difficulties against which he had to contend, we may well say that he fulfilled his resolution nobly. From this date we hear constantly of his literary efforts, tho for some

<sup>15</sup> *Autobiography*.

<sup>16</sup> See page 10.

<sup>17</sup> *Autobiography*.

time, he goes on to tell us, William Laidlaw was the only person who found the least merit in his verses. But here, as in some other places, Hogg is exaggerating the trials of his early apprenticeship to letters for the sake of effect. He had in reality begun to be locally recognized by this time.

Hogg's first attempt at composition of which anything is known was a poetical epistle to a student friend of divinity, composed of borrowed lines from Dryden's *Virgil* and Harvey's *Life of Bruce*. The first piece wholly his own was *An Address to the Duke of Buccleugh on Behalf o' mysel' and ither poor folk*. Then *The Way that the World goes on* and *Wattie's and Geordie's Foreign Intelligence* earned for him the title of which he was so proud—Jamie the poeter.

There was a group of men commonly known as the Big Four, who met generally upon the hillside for self-improvement. This coterie consisted of Hogg and William Laidlaw and their brothers, William Hogg and Alexander Laidlaw. They would prepare essays and write verses, read to one another, criticize and lay wagers upon their respective abilities. A full account of their doings and how their incantations were thought in the countryside to have raised the devil and produced the great storm of 1794 is fully set forth in the paper on *Storms*. The *Autobiography* contains another interesting anecdote about the early work of this set.

In the spring of the year 1798, as Alexander Laidlaw, a neighboring shepherd, my brother William, and myself, were resting on the side of a hill above Ettrick Church, I happened in the course of our conversation to drop some hints of my superior talents in poetry. William said, that, as to putting words into rhyme, it was a thing which he never could do to any sense: but that, if I wished to enter the lists with him in blank verse, he would take me up for any bet that I pleased. Laidlaw declared that he would venture likewise. This being settled, and the judges named, I accepted the challenge; but a dispute arising respecting the subject, we were obliged to resort to the following mode of decision: Ten subjects having been named the lots were cast, and, amongst them all, that which fell to be elucidated by our matchless pens, was, *the stars!*—things which we knew little more about, than merely that they were burning and twinkling over us, and to be seen every night when the clouds were away. I began with high hopes and great warmth, and in a week declared my theme ready for the comparison; Laidlaw announced his next week; but my brother made us wait a full half year; and then, on being urged, presented his unfinished. The arbiters were then dispersed, and the cause was never properly judged; but those to whom they were shown rather gave the preference to my brother's. This is certain that it was far superior to either of

the other two in the sublimity of the ideas; but, besides being in bad measure, it was often bombastical. The title of it was "Urania's Tour"; that of Laidlaw's, "Astronomical Thoughts"; and that of mine, "Reflections on a View of the Nocturnal Heavens".<sup>18</sup>

On page 12, 1796 is given as the beginning of Hogg's literary efforts. This is the date given in the *Autobiography*, but is evidently an error. At the beginning of the first edition of the *Autobiography* in its permanent form Hogg refers to the fact that the material had already appeared in the form of three letters. No biographer has seemed to think it worth while to look up the origin of this interesting piece of writing. These letters appeared in the *Scots' Magazine* in the years 1804-5, and, as the writer says, are concerned far more with trifles than the later edition. In them 1793 is given as the date of *This is the way the World goes on*, of *Willie and Geordie*, and of the address to Buccleugh. Similarly, biographers have followed Hogg's assertion that his first published poem was *Donald MacDonald*, printed in 1800. Hogg's forgetfulness of material of which he was not afterward proud is proverbial. A little search after truth, however, unearths from the pages of the *Scots' Magazine* the *Mistakes of a Night*, published in October, 1794. This poem is unsigned, but is claimed by Hogg in one of the *Autobiographical Letters*, and on page 624 of the magazine for that issue is the following editorial footnote:

We are disposed to give the above a place to encourage a young poet. We hope he will improve, for which end we advise him to be at more pains to make his rhymes answer, and to attend more to grammatical accuracy.

The second autobiographical letter gives us the information that *Glengyle* (1794) was founded on a story told by an old woman named Cameron who had been interested in the rebellion of 1745; and that *The Happy Swains* was another story from the same source and filled 150 pages.

In 1795 he Hogg<sup>19</sup> was summoned to Selkirk as a witness against one of his acquaintances for fishing in close time, and, being persuaded by several of his companions interested in that business, that it was both sinful to swear and base and shameful to betray his acquaintance, he either evaded or refused to give direct answers to the questions put to him for some time; at length, seeing there was no alternative, he re-

<sup>18</sup> *Autobiography*.

<sup>19</sup> *Autobiographical Letters*. They were written in the third person.

luctantly complied, but at the same time told his persecutors that he would soon find a way to expose their ignorance and sacrilegious conduct to the world; and immediately he set about writing his *Scots Gentleman*, a comedy in five acts, one of which was entirely occupied with the examination of the fishers. This piece, though it no doubt has its faults, yet, in general, is not destitute of merit; the last mentioned part in particular is so replete with blunt but natural answers, that it never fails to excite the most lively burst of laughter when read to an Ettrick audience.

The recovery from a serious illness was commemorated in 1798 by *Farewell ye Grots, Farewell ye Glens*. Hogg records this illness in the *Autobiography* but omits the account of the poem contained in the corresponding Autobiographical Letter. And previous to 1799 Hogg had published several pieces in *The Edinburgh Magazine*.

In the year 1800, I began and finished the first two acts of a tragedy, denominated *The Castle in the Wood*; and flattering myself that it was about to be a masterpiece I showed it to Mr. William Laidlaw, my literary confessor; who, on returning it, declared it faulty in the extreme; and perceiving that he had black strokes drawn down through several of my most elaborate speeches, I cursed his stupidity, threw it away, and never added another line.<sup>20</sup>

While it is true that none of this verse belies the editorial note quoted above, and none is worth republishing in a collective edition of the Shepherd's works, an examination of it fully prepares one to find him in 1800 the author of a spirited and finished song that at once caught the popular fancy and went far towards bringing fame to one who had hitherto enjoyed only a local and anonymous reputation on a small scale.

<sup>20</sup> This paragraph appeared in the *Autobiography* of 1807, and 1821, but was omitted from the later editions.

The above fact explains Mrs. Garden's ignorance of the identity of the Scotch Gentleman "whom Hogg murdered" as set forth in his earliest extant letter. See Mrs. Garden's *Memoirs*, page 37.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE PASTORALS AND THE MOUNTAIN BARD

THE immediate cause of Hogg's leaving Blackhouse was the condition of his family at home. His father had grown too old to manage the farm himself. William, the eldest son, was married and found the house too small for the convenience of his family, so James came over from Yarrow to take temporary charge of affairs.

He returned to Ettrick at Whitsuntide, and in this year, 1800, was published what is generally considered as his earliest printed song. The immediate popularity of *Donald MacDonald* was very great, and Hogg gives several amusing anecdotes of times when it was sung in music halls thruout the land as well as at the tables of the military magnates. It, however, added little to his reputation as a poet, for, as Hogg says, it was generally sung without any attention paid to him who wrote it.

Hogg was always vain of his powers, and the reception of this song for a time turned his head. In a few months, in 1801, Hogg went to Edinburgh to sell a flock of sheep. They were not all disposed of at once, a fact that required him to remain over in the capital till the next market day. In order to expend the time profitably he decided to issue a volume of verse. In great haste he set about the task of transcribing some of his earlier poems from memory and transmitted them to a printer in a state the imperfection of which afterward caused him much chagrin. He laments this rash adventure in the *Autobiography*, but the tiny volume forms an important link in the tangible development of his genius.<sup>1</sup>

The volume consisted of 62 pages; and a list of errata mentions 8 mistakes, sufficiently disproving Hogg's later assertion that the volume abounded in errors on every page. T. Craig-Brown in his *History of Selkirkshire* says that

Hogg had the weakness to pretend that he had hurriedly written out the contents from memory during his two days' stay at Edinburgh; but he elsewhere let it out that the manuscript had the advantage of leisurely revisal by Laidlaw and Clarkson.

<sup>1</sup> *Scottish Pastorals—Poems, Songs, etc., mostly written in the dialect of the south.* By James Hogg. Edinburgh. Printed by John Taylor, Grassmarket, 1801. Price one shilling.

Were it not for the care this author shows in other parts of his work one would be prompted to let this assertion go as quite unfounded, it is so opposed to Hogg's own account of the transactions and to the accounts given by several of his contemporaries who were his personal friends.<sup>2</sup> The remark that Hogg "let out" may be interpreted to mean merely that there was a chance to condemn the proof sheets that was not taken. In all probability Hogg saw no reason to belittle the work till he began subsequently to trim his sails in accordance with the failure recorded by its reception. There can be no doubt that the Shepherd thought well of the poems at the time. He quoted five stanzas of the *Dialogue in a Country Churchyard* in one of his *Letters from the Highlands* (1802) and was much pleased to find *Willie and Keatie* republished in the *Scots' Magazine* (January, 1801, page 52).

And, indeed, Hogg had reason to be proud. When one considers that these poems were written long before 1801, when Hogg was raising himself almost unaided from the condition of an ignorant shepherd, one finds them marvelous enough. But few, perhaps none, of the readers of the little volume, at the time of its appearance, knew much about the name on the title page. Judged without allowance for the conditions under which these poems were written, the verses seem poor enough to deserve the oblivion into which they promptly fell. Much of what is good in the volume is contained in the second song, which is not even dignified with a title. What is elsewhere mere jingle here passes into true rhythm:

O Shepherd, the weather is misty and changing,  
Will you show me over the hills to Traquair?

She's young and she's witty, she's lovely and pretty,  
She's chaste as the swans upon Lochfell at Yule.

In *Dustie* we find one of those sympathetic passages about dogs that abound in the Shepherd's writings:

But yet for a' his gruesome dealins',  
He was a dog o' tender feelins';  
When I lay sick and like to die,  
He watched me wi' a constant eye;  
An' then when e'er I spak' or stirred,  
He wagged his tail, an' whinged an' nurr'd.  
When saams were sung at any meetin',  
He yowl'd an' thought the fock war greetin'.

<sup>2</sup> See *Memoirs of a Literary Veteran*, by R. P. Gillies, Vol. 1, page 120; also Mrs. Garden, page 33, where she quotes the *Autobiography* without contradiction.

*Willie and Keatie*, on the whole, is far the best of the volume. It tells a simple love tale with genuine feeling in the simplest language, and displays the author's love and accurate observation for nature.

From these rugged prospects turn ye;  
Mark yon rauntree spreading wide,  
Where the clear but noisy burnie  
Rushes down the mountain side.

Ten lang days I thought upon her,  
Quite deprived o' peace an' rest;  
Findin' I could brink no langer,  
I resolved to do my best.

Now my yellow hair I plaited,  
Gae my downy chin a shave,  
Thrice my tales of love repeated,  
Fearin' I would misbehave.

Far away I took my journey,  
Left our hills sae high an' green,  
Thro' a pleasant fertile country,  
Which I ne'er before had seen.

Here we're charmed wi' works o' nature,  
Craggy cliff, an' lonely glenn;  
There I oft stood like a statue,  
Wond'ring at the works o' men.

Verdant pastures, grand inclosures,  
Thrivin' woods, an' buildins' new,  
Hale hillsides sawn up wi' clover,  
Ev'ry where arose in view.

Lang I gaed and kendna whither,  
Struck wi' ilka thing I saw,  
Where yon little windin' river  
Murmurs ower the stanes sae sma'.

Phoebus, now in all his glory,  
Sunk into the western main;  
Frae his labour, soft an' slowly,  
Homeward trudged the weary swain.

Nature, freed frae her auld lover  
Roughsome winter, gaunt and lean;  
Spring to charm, whose airs had moved her,  
Rob'd herself in cheerful green.

A' their little feathered tenants  
Sweetly sang on ilka tree;  
Lads an' lasses, wives an' callants,  
A' were gay but lonely me.

Walkin' thro' the elms sae stately,  
Thinkin' on the step I'd ta'en,  
There I met my bonny Keaty,  
Comin' thro' the wood her lane.

Fear'd and fond, when I approach'd her,  
How my heart began to beat!  
But I ventured to accost her,  
Askin' where she gaed sae late?

Wi' a smile that quite bewitch'd me,  
She return'd, "What's that to thee?  
"Ere you reach the town that's next ye,  
"Lad, ye'll be as late as me."

Mony question I spiered at her,  
Mony ane I kend fu' weel,  
If an inn stood on the water,  
Where a stranger wad get biel?

Where she liv'd, an' what they ca'd her,  
Father's name and mother's too,  
Ilka burn an' ilka water,  
Ilka house within our view.

Lang we stood amang the timber,  
Frae me she could never win;  
How the sterns began to glimmer,  
Drowsy twilight clos'd his een.

"Shepherd," said she, "I wad thank ye,  
"Wad ye turn and set me hame;  
"Ghasts an' witches are sae plenty,  
"I'm afraid to gang my lane.

"When we reach my father's dwellin',  
"Ye's hae bed an' supper free;  
"They'll requite ye when I tell them  
"How ye've been sae kind to me."

Happy in the fair occasion,  
How I blest her bonny face,  
Nor received the invitation,  
Proffered me wi' sic a grace.

This unimportant volume has been given more space, perhaps, than it deserves, but none of the poems has been included in subsequent editions and the volume itself is not now to be had.

In the autumn of 1802 occurred the most important single event in Hogg's life—his meeting with Sir Walter Scott. Hogg had already seen a portion of the *Minstrelsy* which dealt with a subject as familiar to him as to Scott. He at once set to work to write some "old ballads" which he forwarded to Scott. Sir Walter, then Mr. Scott, became interested, and in his next "raid" he hunted up the poet-shepherd. In the *Life of Scott*<sup>3</sup> Hogg refers to this as his first meeting with Sir Walter, and many have copied the assertion as a fact. It is, however, but another example of Hogg's forgetfulness. The following letter to Scott is dated June 30, 1802:

Dear Sir,—I have been perusing your *Minstrelsy* very diligently for a while past, and it being the first book I ever perused which was written by a person I had seen and conversed with, the consequence hath been to me a most sensible pleasure; for in fact it is the remarks and modern pieces that I have most delighted in, being as it were personally acquainted with many of the antient pieces formerly.

My mother is actually a living miscellany of old songs. I never believed that she had half so many till I came to a trial. There are none in your collection of which she hath not a part, and I should by this time have had a great number written for your amusement, thinking them all of great antiquity and lost to posterity—had I not luckily lighted upon a collection of songs in two volumes, published by I know not whom in which I recognized about half a score of my mother's best songs almost word for word. No doubt I was piqued but it saved me much trouble, paper, and ink; for I am carefully avoiding everything which I have seen or heard of being in print, although I have no doubt that I shall err, being acquainted with almost no collections of that sort; but I am not afraid that you too will mistake. I am still at a loss with respect to some. . . .

Suspend your curiosity, Mr. Scott. You will see them when I see you. . . . But as I suppose you have no personal acquaintance in this parish, it would be presumption in me to expect that you will visit my cottage, but I will attend you in any part of the Forest if you will send me the word. I am far from suspecting that a person of your discernment—d—n it, I'll blot out that word, 'tis so like flattery—I say I don't think you will despise a shepherd's "humble cot and hamely fare" as Burns hath it; yet though I would be extremely proud of the visit, hang me if I know what I should do w'ye. I am surprised to find that the songs in your collection differ so widely from my mother's. . . .

Many indeed are not aware of the manners of this place; it is but

<sup>3</sup>See page 95.

lately emerged from barbarity, and till this present age the poor illiterate people in these glens knew of no other entertainment in the long winter nights than in repeating and listening to these feats of their ancestors which I believe to be handed down inviolate from father to son for many generations, although, no doubt, had a copy been taken of them at the end of every fifty years, there must have been the same difference which the repeater would have insensibly fallen into, merely by the change of terms in that time. I believe it is thus that many very antient songs have been modernized. . . .

Pardon, my dear Sir, the freedom I have taken in addressing you,—it is my nature and I could not resist the impulse of writing to you any longer. Let me hear from you as soon as this comes to your hand, and tell me when you will be in Ettrick Forest, and suffer me to subscribe myself, your most humble and affectionate servant,

JAMES HOGG.

It was this letter that brought Scott to the Shepherd's hut and resulted, among other things, in the addition of the ballad of *Auld Maitland* to the collection of the *Minstrelsy*. Many merry adventures concerning their antiquarian hunt are related in the *Autobiography* and are also described twenty years later in *Lines to Sir Walter Scott*. This, tho not their first meeting was the beginning of their friendship which lasted till the death of Sir Walter. For thirty years his kindly nature never lost sight of the self-cultivated shepherd whom he assisted first and last in a thousand ways.

About this time, Hogg, who was always looking somewhere else, in a mistaken notion that he could thus better his condition, undertook a journey to Harris. His acquaintance with the Highlands is connected with an interesting page in his literary career. His first trip thither was in 1793 when he took a flock of sheep from Blackhouse to Strathfillan. In 1801 he traveled in the Grampian Mountains and penetrated as far as the sources of the river Dee. A series of five letters that appeared in the *Scots' Magazine* between October, 1802, and June, 1803, are addressed to S——— W——— Esq. A fourth tour was similarly described in a series of letters that were printed by Alexander Gardner of Paisley in 1888, with the following Introductory Note:

The following letters, descriptive of a tour which the Ettrick Shepherd made in the Highlands in the year 1803 have recently been discovered by his daughter, Mrs. Garden, among her father's papers. They were to all appearance intended for the eye of Sir Walter Scott, but whether they were ever read by him is unknown. So far as can be ascertained after the most careful search they have never before been

published. There is no reference to them in Hogg's *Autobiography*, and until recently the survivors of the family were not aware of their existence. The letters speak for themselves, and it is unnecessary here to say more than that they appear to have been written by the Shepherd from memory soon after his return home, and some five years before the publication of *The Lady Of The Lake*.<sup>4</sup>

During the tour of 1803 he visited the outer Hebrides and came home full of the idea of migrating to Harris. During the ten years he had spent at Blackhouse he had managed to save some two hundred pounds, which, in conjunction with the capital of a neighbor, he decided to sink in the adventure. A farm was procured and the necessary stock bought, and all preparations made for the departure. Hogg wrote the *Farewell to Ettrick*, the tenderest of all his pathetic poems, and was ready to tear up the old ties forever. His partner was actually on his way north with the stock when word came in July, 1804 that, thru some legal flaw in the title they could not have possession of the farm. In consequence, both Hogg and his partner lost all they had and the Shepherd found himself a ruined man. This was the first of many ill-advised ventures that resulted in disaster and temporarily reduced him to beggary. But his flow of spirits was unconquerable and he experienced only a momentary depression. He retired for the summer into Cumberland. He doubtless visited Keswick, but on this subject Hogg was always very reticent. On his return to Scotland in the autumn he gave up the notion of farming on his own responsibility and became shepherd to a Mr. Harkness at Mitchel-Slack.

He remained here till 1807, during which time he met his brother poet, Allan Cunningham, and improved his acquaintance with Sir Walter Scott. In 1806 a letter of Scott refers to Hogg's business as a factor in valuing lands, an avocation he followed with slight success as late as 1811. While at Mitchel-Slack his constant companion was Hector, the collie

<sup>4</sup>The writer of this note has evidently overlooked the fact that these letters are referred to in one of the Autobiographical Letters tho not in the *Autobiography* in its later form. "I had meant to give some account of his *Journey through the Highlands, and The Mountain Bard*; two publications of Mr. Hogg's nearly ready for the press," (Second letter, written after the publication of the first series of letters and before the trip described in the third had been taken.) "He was afterward employed in preparing for the press his first, second, and third journeys through the Highlands; and in composing several pieces, some of which have been published in the Magazine, and which he intends to publish in a volume by themselves as soon as a few illustrations are got ready." (Third letter.) The third journey referred to in the above was similarly described by letters that appeared in the *Scots' Magazine* from June, 1808, to March, 1809.

whose effigy now adorns the monument at the head of St. Mary's Loch.

The climax of his sojourn at Mitchel-Slack was the publication in 1807 of *The Mountain Bard*. This volume had been under way for some time. As early as 1803 Hogg dined with Scott, a dinner that gave rise to a story told by Lockhart to Hogg's discredit which, however, probably did not happen just as the great biographer tells it. Something unseemly, however, did happen as is proved by Hogg's letter of apology written to Scott the next day, but it was insufficient to offend Sir Walter and needs no further attention here. This dinner had been brought about for the purpose of discussing the publication of *The Mountain Bard*, and it was doubtless due to Scott's advice that the book was held back for several years. At last Constable was persuaded to publish it, and it appeared dedicated to Sir Walter Scott. The *Autobiography* gives a humorous and characteristic account of the dealings with the publisher. He was at first averse to the transaction and informed the Shepherd that poetry would not sell. The writer sturdily defended his own verse on the score that it was as good as anybody's and, when told that no verse would sell, fancied everybody's hand against him. He also narrates the slipshod way in which he delivered the subscription copies, getting nothing for some and ten times their value for others. Simultaneously, Constable published *Hogg on Sheep*, a practical handbook for shepherds, that received a prize from the Highland Society. From these two books Hogg realized about three hundred pounds.

This is as fitting a place as any to consider the *Autobiography* which first appeared as a preface to *The Mountain Bard*. In the issue of August 4, 1804, of the *Scots' Magazine* is a letter signed by J. Welch, which speaks of the contributions of Hogg in the highest terms, and desires some personal information concerning the new poet who bids fair to "rival if not excel all that have yet written in the Scottish dialect". The editor answers that he knows nothing beyond the fact that he believes the author "is actually a shepherd". A few further facts are contained in a letter signed A.H.B. that appeared in the issue for October of the same year. To satisfy the desire of a growing public attention, Hogg wrote the three Autobiographical Letters already alluded to. They are all dated "Banks of Ettrick"; and the first, that of December 7,



1804, is unsigned. That of June 8, 1805, and that of September 15, 1805, are signed "Z". They are all written in the third person. These letters were revised into the connected narrative of 1807 prefixed to *The Mountain Bard*. Many minor details were stricken out and the whole rewritten in the first person. This memoir reappeared in 1821 when the third edition of *The Mountain Bard* was called for, and again in 1832 as part of Volume I of the *Altrive Tales*. Each version was brought down to the date of issue and differed from the former in the periods covered by each. The last contains several passages that are of a personal nature concerning the Shepherd's quarrel with Mr. Blackwood that have been omitted from editions published since the author's death. The *Autobiography* thruout is written in a bright, entertaining style, is full of trivial errors due to a faulty memory and the habit of exaggeration, and, of course, treats personal matters from the author's biased standpoint, and is colored everywhere by his inordinate vanity.

It is worth while to note that none of Hogg's best poetry was written deliberately for publication. His most memorable verse is always that which he "had by him at the time". *The Mountain Bard*, *The Forest Minstrel*—a complete failure and deservedly so—and his greatest work, *The Queen's Wake*, were volumes made up out of what he had already written, merely edited for the purposes of publication. Thus was composed the forgotten volume of the *Pastorals*, and all of them except parts of *The Forest Minstrel* show that natural spontaneity and flow of genius which is altogether absent from the longer poems composed after the poet became known as a man of letters.

This first important volume of Hogg's verse contains poetry of a very high order. It deals with personal matters or local legends which it treats in the ballad style; and Hogg's efforts in this form of imitation permit favorable comparison with Scott's. *Sir David Graem* is the best of this kind in the volume and is only not quite so good as *Kilmeny* and *The Witch of Fife* in *The Queen's Wake*. The telling effect of the refrain,

The dow flew east, the dow flew west,

and such ghastly images as that contained in the stanza:

There wasna sic e'en on the Border green,  
As the piercing e'en o' Sir David Graem;  
She gliskid wi' her e'e where these e'en should be,  
But the raven had been there afore she came.

help to make this ballad the very essence of uncanny realism. Two compositions of a very different kind are *The Farewell to Ettrick* and *The Author's Address to his Old Dog Hector*. No shepherd is ever without his dog, but no shepherd, one fancies, ever loved dogs with a love like this shepherd. Dogs are on every page of his life and works. No tenderer, more sympathetic tribute of genuine affection for the four-footed companions of the hills ever flowed from the pen of a poet than this address to "my auld towzy, trusty friend". Hogg was ever a master of pathos, and his pathos sprang from his deepest heart. It was the sight of so many dead larks in a London market that inspired the most beautiful of all his lyrics. It is not surprising, then, that the thought of breaking all the old home ties on the occasion of the emigration to Harris should have prompted such a tender, touching *Farewell*. Were Hogg's reputation as a poet to rest upon the pages of *The Mountain Bard*, these three poems alone would constitute a sufficient claim to the title of a poet of true and varied power.

Hogg never possessed ready money without feeling a remarkable desire to "blow it in", if such slang be permitted, for no other phrase so well expresses the headless, exuberant, slapdash way in which he set about to spend his little fortune without consideration. He had acted thus in the Harris scheme in which he recklessly threw away all his earnings of ten years at Blackhouse; he repeated the experience now; and he was doomed to do it more than once again as the years rolled on.

Nothing would do but Hogg must set up as a farmer on his own responsibility as his father had unwisely done before him. Hogg seems to have been a trusty shepherd, but he possessed none of the canny Scotchman's talent for affairs. He expended all the fortune that he had derived from the publication of the two volumes, in a farm in Dumfriesshire that was far beyond his means to stock. It remained but half-stocked, and was also conducted in a careless way that from the first foretold ruin and destruction. Scott tells us that Hogg's partner was shiftless and given to drink; and here is a picture drawn by an eye-witness that not only shows the condition of affairs on the Shepherd's farm but also explains as well much of his inmost character.

Hogg from being a shepherd on the farm of Mitchel-Slack took, in company with Edie Brydon, the farm of Lockerben. When I paid a

second visit to Lockerben my pretty housekeeper was then gone. It was the time of sheep-shearing, which was just finished. Masters and men were sitting round a small cask of whisky, drinking it raw out of a teacup. They were all rather merry. I sat with them for some time and was regaled with some excellent mutton ham, cakes and butter, whisky and water. I had a surveying engagement at Moffat, about ten miles across a rough moor. A number of the company were going the same route. Mr. Brydon was of the party and fortified his pocket with a bottle of whisky, which was finished on our journey. I was obliged to attend to some papers for the greater part of the night, but I heard the distant sound of reveling. The establishment at Lockerben was soon after broken up—how could it stand?—and Mr. Hogg, with a small reversion took on lease a farm on the water of Sear, in the parish of Penpoint, about seven miles west from Lockerben. Corfardine was its name. I happened to be at Eccles with Mr. Maitland a few days, and one forenoon paid him a visit, distant about three miles. The ground was covered with snow; and, on entering the farm, I found all the sheep on the wrong side of the hill. Hogg was absent, and had been so for some days, feasting, drinking, dancing, and fiddling, &c., with a neighboring farmer. His housekeeper was the most ugly, dirty goblin I had ever beheld; a fearful contrast to his former damsel. He arrived just as I had turned my horse's head to depart.

"Come in", said he; "the lads will soon be home." The inside of his house corresponded with its out. A dirty looking fellow rose from a bed, who was desired to go and look after the sheep. "I have been up", he said, "all night in the drift." "You have been so", said I, "to very little purpose. Your hirsle is on the wrong side of the hill."

He ordered some ham and some bread and butter; but it came through such hands that I could not eat. Over our glass of whisky we had a long conversation. I strongly recommended him to give up his farm and come to Edinburgh, and attend to the publication of *The Mountain Bard*, which he said agreed with his own opinion, for that he had in contemplation a long poem about Queen Mary.<sup>5</sup>

Three years of this was enough. Then Hogg, having become a bankrupt, literally ran off from his creditors and appeared once more in the Ettrick country. His notion was to hire again as a shepherd, but no one would have him. The people of his native vale looked upon such foolish extravagance as not only sinful but absolutely criminal. They would have nothing to do with him. Wherever he went he met with the cold shoulder. All summer nothing was doing for him. At last he made the seemingly rash resolution of going to

<sup>5</sup> Morrison's *Reminiscences of Scott, Hogg, etc.*, *Tait's Magazine*, Vol. 10, page 574. The reader will notice a slight slip as to dates in the above quotation. The article, which is very obscure as to dates, says "about this time, 1809" occurred the conversation referred to. *The Mountain Bard*, however, was published in 1807. Doubtless Morrison confused the above with some conversation that had taken place while Hogg was still at Mitchel-Slack.

Edinburgh to set up his shingle as a man of letters. He says in the *Autobiography* that he always intended to use literature as a crutch, never as a staff, and that he only violated his rule as a last resort. Hogg was certainly a genius, and at the time of his first appearance in Edinburgh as a permanent resident had won an enviable tho local fame as a poet. But he was a self-made genius, inordinately vain, not widely read, and possessed little or no critical ability. Yet, with all these points against him, his first serious venture was to edit and conduct a weekly literary journal. Nothing shows so well the real caliber of this man as the fact that he acquitted himself of this task with credit.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD

(HOGG's striking face was never handsome even tho he possessed so marked a likeness to Sir Walter Scott that Professor Wilson says that one would have thought them brothers. Yet the countenance of this shepherd was open, sincere, and thoroly manly despite its homeliness. He was a man of exceedingly strong physique and great endurance, a tramp over the mountains for thirty miles being a mere nothing in his estimation. In height he was five feet ten and a half inches, and broad chested. It is told that once in an assembly of considerable size the chests of all those present were measured, and his was the second, Sir Walter Scott being first. Later in life his hair became darker brown and then grayish, his eyes were blue and his complexion ruddy. He used regularly to compete at the outdoor athletic contests of the St. Ronan's games and always acquitted himself with credit.

Writes Mr. S. C. Hall some years later:

Up rose a man hale and hearty as a mountain breeze, fresh as a branch of hillside heather, with a visage unequivocally Scotch, high cheek bones, a sharp and clear gray eye, an expansive forehead, sandy hair with ruddy cheeks, which the late nights and the late mornings of a month of London had not yet swallowed. His form was manly and muscular, and his voice strong and gladsome, with a rich Scottish accent, which he probably on that occasion rather heightened than depressed.

Lockhart speaks thus of Hogg:

His hands and face are still brown as if he lived entirely *sub dio*. His very hair has a coarse stringiness about it, which proves beyond dispute its utter ignorance of all the arts of the *frisour*; and hangs in playful whips and cords about his ears in a style of the most perfect innocence imaginable. His mouth, which when he smiles nearly cuts the totality of his face in twain, is an object that would make Chevalier Ruspini die with indignation: for his teeth have been allowed to grow where they listed and as they listed, presenting more resemblance in arrangement (and color, too) to a body of crouching sharp-shooters, than to any more regular species of array. The effect of a forehead towering with a true poetie grandeur above such features as these, and of an eye that illuminates their surface with the genuine lightnings of genius . . . these are things which I cannot so easily transfer to my paper.

Hogg had many amiable characteristics and some that were less commendable. He was extremely careless, not only in business affairs but also in the details of his literary work. We have already seen how improvidently he embarked in the emigration scheme to Harris, and the deplorable waste in Dumfriesshire of what little money he had realized from *The Mountain Bard* and the book on sheep. Later in life when the Duke of Buccleugh kindly presented Hogg with the small farm of Altrive Lake rent free for life, nothing would do but he must embark in further ventures that brought again ruin upon him and his family. He rented the neighboring farm of Mount Bengier on the hillside above where now stands the Gordon Arms. He rented it against the advice of all his friends, sunk in it every penny he had, and, after a few years of struggle, returned to Altrive, once more a bankrupt. Still later, towards the end of his life, just after a publisher had failed, carrying with him what little hope of remuneration Hogg entertained at the time from a new literary venture, the Shepherd trusted the same publisher with a second work, and, had he lived a few months longer, the careless poet would have experienced another financial failure that practically threw the survivors of his family into temporary poverty. Many of these misfortunes were quite due to Hogg's misguided confidence in his own wisdom and to his arrogant refusal to take the friendly advice of those who were far better qualified to judge. But it should be said to his credit that his buoyancy of spirit rose superior to all calamity. Sometimes he was momentarily cast down, but depression with him was always short-lived. He generously blamed himself and never others, even when others were to blame. He would take the bull by the horns in a sturdy, robust fashion, set to work anew, and never wasted his time in vain lamentation over what could not be helped.

It is said that when he gave directions to the architect who planned the cottage at Altrive Lake he stipulated that the flues should be so constructed as to pass all the smoke out of one chimney. But this ruse, commendable in theory for the man who wished to convince his inquisitive neighbors that no one was at home save the occupant of the kitchen and thus preserve his time in quiet for literary work, was not successful in practice. Like Daft Jock, they found him out.

Before long Hogg's cottage was the gathering-place for all the Ettrick Forest and beyond, and we soon find the Shepherd, between his friends and Glenlivet, living far beyond his means. One of the most peculiar contradictions in this extraordinary man's character is the fact that he was one of the most careful, capable, and successful shepherds in the Forest, but in all other affairs of the farm and in his literary work he was shiftless in the extreme.

Some of his literary carelessness can be excused on the score of his lack of formal education. His knowledge of polite learning was derived wholly from his desultory reading without a guide that did not begin till he had reached the age of manhood. We have seen how a tricky memory led him to include many inaccurate assertions in the *Autobiography*. Scott accuses him of being utterly unfit for the task of historian and, by implication, unable to write successful historical novels. But Scott, great as he was, was not just the man to throw stones at such a house of glass, for he made no secret of the fact that he himself departed from the facts of history whenever the practice improved his story; and, in all probability, Scott's personal bias on one hand and Hogg's on the other led them to about equal excesses of laudation and damnation of the character of Claverhouse.

Never having been trained to study, Hogg could hardly be expected to prove an accurate investigator of the facts of history; but less venial is his failure to apply himself to the task of improving his literary style. Here, again, Scott, whose patient interest in the Shepherd's welfare withstood a thousand shocks, was always at him, reasoning, commanding, beseeching him to strive harder to do himself greater justice. Hogg was an extremely rapid composer, and much of his verse and most of his prose gives evidence of this fact. Scott's frequent advice to cut and to revise was never heeded by the head-strong shepherd. He rather boasts in the *Autobiography* of the fact that he never wrote a second draft of his manuscripts, a habit that sometimes occasioned an utter loss of a composition thru miscarriage in transportation. The utmost concession he would make to Sir Walter's well meant efforts at improvement was the resolution to do better the next time.

Hogg's vanity and egotism were so monumental as to be

amusing rather than condemnable. He was a living caricature in this respect. Scott writes of how Hogg dropped in to breakfast:

The honest grunter opines with a delightful *naïveté* that Moore's verses are far ower sweet—answered by Thompson that Moore's ear or notes, I forget which, were finely strung. "They are far ower finely strung", replied he of the Forest, "for mine are just reeght." It reminded me of Queen Bess, when questioning Melville sharply and closely whether Queen Mary was taller than her, and extracting an answer in the affirmative she replied, "Then your queen is too tall for I am just the right height."

He had a profound belief in himself and his powers,—a large share of egotism. His vanity was in no way concealed; he wore it on his sleeve, and it was a source of some amusement to his friends. But the consciousness under it all of a latent struggling power of genius was that which kept the heart in him to face the difficulties of social position, and defects of education, which few men in Scotland, or indeed in the world of letters, have had the courage to battle with and the force to overcome. The conviction was somehow in him from the first that he could achieve a place among the poets of his native land, and, while this feeling sustained him, it proved in the end to be well founded. His poetic faculty was his one title to distinction; and we need not be surprised that he was proud of it, or that he was touched to the quick by any disparagement of his powers.<sup>4</sup>

Hogg himself, in his life of Scott, uses the phrase, "before my ruling passion of egotism came across me". He fully realized the fact and the impossibility of conquering it, so he fondled it, got the most amusement he could out of it, and compelled others by the open simplicity of his character to do the same.

"Aye, ye're a learned man", he sometimes said to me in after years; "there's nae doubt about that, wi' your Virgils and Homers and Dantes and Petrarchs. But aiblins ye mind yon fragment upon the slate that ye despised t'ither morning. Eh, man, sin syne, it's ettling to turn out the vera best thing I ever composed; and that's no saying little, ye ken."

In the same memoir Gillies relates that he wanted to see what Hogg had written on another occasion on his slate. The request was refused because the work was only half done, whereupon Gillies said that Scott and Erskine both consulted the advice of friends.

"That's vera like a man", replied Hogg, "that's frightened to gang by himself, and needs someone to lead him! Eh, man, neither William

<sup>1</sup> Veitch's Introduction to Mrs. Garden's *Memoir*, page ix.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of a Literary Veteran*, by R. P. Gillies, Vol. I. page 122.



Erskine nor ony critic beneath the sun shall ever lead *mei*! If I hae na sense enuch to mak and mend my ain wark, no other hands or heads shall meddle wi' it; I want nae help, thank God, from books nor men."

Gillies adds:

The good Shepherd's vanity differed from that of all other authors, inasmuch as it was avowed and undisguised, and he himself laughed at it objectively as such.

So one might go on multiplying examples. The *Autobiography* alone contains many, and not the least is found in the whole conception of *The Poetic Mirror*, which will be described later.

Lockhart's description of Hogg's behaviour at Scott's dinner, and the account of Hogg's life in Dumfriesshire already quoted from Mr. Morris, bear witness to his conviviality. Hogg says himself in one place that he often drank enough whisky to make himself a fit object for seizure by the customs officers; but in another place he comes nearer the truth when he writes:

Sociality is so completely interwoven in my nature that I have no power to resist indulging it, but, I have been blessed by providence with a constitutional forbearance which prevents me from ever indulging in any sinful excess, a blessing for which, circumstanced as I am, I can never be too thankful.<sup>3</sup>

Hogg possessed an erratic, impatient temper that often led him into unnecessary difficulties. His quarrel with Blackwood could have been avoided, his grudge against Christopher North, one of his best and longest friends, was unfounded, and his one serious quarrel with Scott grew out of the trivial refusal to contribute to *The Poetic Mirror*. Hogg's anger, however, was quick to rise and quick to fall. Every fuss was eagerly patched up and he never bore the least malice towards those he had foolishly offended, a sure sign of a sober mind.

The Shepherd's code of honor was peculiar and amusing. The following quotations will bear insertion in spite of their length. The *Glasgow Chronicle* of May 12, 1818, contained the following paragraph:

Yesterday forenoon a gentleman from Glasgow, whose name had been immoderately introduced into *Blackwood's Magazine*, horsewhipped him opposite his own door in Princes Street. As this gentleman was stepping into the Glasgow coach, at four o'clock, Mr. Blackwood, armed

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Dr. Crichton, quoted by Mrs. Garden, page 230.

with a bludgeon, and apparently somewhat intoxicated, and accompanied by a man having the appearance of a shop porter, attempted a violent assault, but without injury, the attack being repelled and retaliated by the free use of the horsewhip. A crowd, attracted by the occurrence, speedily separated the parties.

Blackwood replied to this paragraph by a letter whose main point was to show that Douglas got far the worst of it, and Hogg wrote the following:

To the Editor of the *Glasgow Chronicle*,  
Sir,

A copy of the *Glasgow Chronicle* has just been handed to me, in which I observe a paragraph concerning Mr. Blackwood and *a gentleman from Glasgow*, which I declare to be manifestly false. The paragraph must have been written by that same *gentleman* himself, as no other spectator could possibly have given such a statement. Among other matters, he says that Mr. B. was "accompanied by a man having the appearance of a shop-porter". He is a *gentleman from Glasgow*, and I am "*a man having the appearance of a shop-porter*" (for there was no person accompanying Mr. B. but myself). Now I do not take this extremely well, and should like to know what it is that makes him *a gentleman* and me so far below one. Plain man as I am, it cannot be my appearance; I will show myself on the steps at the door of Mackay's Hotel with him whenever he pleases, or any where else. It cannot be on account of my parents or relations, for in that I am likewise willing to abide the test. If it is, as is commonly believed, that a man is known by his company, I can tell this same *gentleman* that I am a frequent and welcome guest in companies where he would not be admitted as a waiter. If it is to any behaviour of mine that he alludes in this his low species of wit, I hereby declare, Sir, to you and to the world, that *I never attacked a defenceless man who was apparently one half below me in size and strength, nor stood patiently and was cudged like an ox when that person thought proper to retaliate*. As to the circumstances of the drubbing Mr. Blackwood gave the same *gentleman from Glasgow*, so many witnessed it, there can be no mistake about the truth.

JAMES HOGG.

No. 6, Charles Street, Edinburgh,  
13th May, 1818.

Amusing as this exhibition of offended pride is, Scott in his *Journal* gives us another anecdote that puts the Shepherd's fierceness in quite a different light.

Our poor friend Hogg has had an *affair of honour*. . . . Two mornings ago about seven in the morning, my servant announced while I was shaving in my dressing-room, that Mr. Hogg wished earnestly to speak to me. He was ushered in, and I cannot describe the half startled,

half humorous air with which he said, scratching his head most vehemently "Odd, Scott, here's twae fo'k's come frae Glasgow to provoke me to fecht a duel." "A duel", answered I in great astonishment, "and what do you intend to do?" "Odd, I just locket them up in my room and sent the lassie for twae o' the police, and just gie the men over to their charge, and I thoecht I wad come and ask you what I should do. . . ." He had already settled for himself the question whether he was to fight or not, and all that he had to do was to go to the police and tell the charge he had to bring against the two Glasgow gentlemen. . . . The Glaswegians were greatly too many for him in court. . . . They returned in all triumph and glory, and Hogg took the wings of the morning and fled to his cottage at Altrive, not deeming himself altogether safe in the streets of Edinburgh! Now, although I do not hold valour to be an essential article in the composition of a man like Hogg, yet I heartily wish he could have prevailed on himself to swagger a little. . . . But, considering his failure in the field and in the Sheriff's Office, I fear we must apply to Hogg the apology that is made for Waller by his biographer: "Let us not condemn him with untempered severity, because he was not such a prodigy as the world has seldom seen—because his character included not the poet, the orator, and the hero."

The Shepherd was jolly, self-made, and confident, and became in later life well-behaved in and thoroly conversant with the usages of society far above the rank in which he had been born. In his early days, however, he encountered many mishaps. It may be worth while here to quote the passage from Lockhart to which reference has already been made:

'When Hogg entered the drawing-room, Mrs. Scott, being at the time in a delicate state of health, was reclining on a sofa. The Shepherd, after being presented, and making his best bow, forthwith took possession of another sofa placed opposite to hers, and placed himself thereupon at all his length; for, as he said afterwards, "I thought I could never do wrong to copy the lady of the house." As his dress at this period was precisely that in which any ordinary herdsman attends cattle to the market, and as his hands, moreover, bore most legible marks of a recent sheep-smearing, the lady of the house did not observe with perfect equanimity the novel usage to which her chintz was exposed. The Shepherd, however, remarked nothing of all this—dined heartily and drank freely, and, by jest, anecdote, and song, afforded plentiful merriment to the more civilized part of the company. As the liquor operated, his familiarity increased and strengthened; from "Mr. Scott", he advanced to "Sherra", and thence to "Scott", "Walter", and "Wattie",—until, at supper, he fairly convulsed the whole party by addressing Mrs. Scott as "Charlotte".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Scott's *Journal*, page 454.

<sup>5</sup> Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, page 111 (Black's edition, 1896).

### The Shepherd himself writes in his *Life of Scott*:

I must confess that, before people of high rank, he [Scott] did not much encourage my speeches and stories. He did not then hang down his brows, as when he was ill-pleased with me, but he raised them up an angle, and put his upper lip far over the under one, seeming to be always terrified at what was to come out next, and then he generally cut me short by some droll anecdote to the same purport of what I was saying. In this he did not give me fair justice, for, in my own broad, homely way, I am a very good speaker and teller of a story, too.<sup>6</sup>

### Writes R. P. Gillies:

On one of these occasions, during dessert, the Shepherd was painfully puzzled, for, not having till then met with ice-cream in the shape (as he said) of a "fine hot sweet puddin", he took incautiously a large spoonful, whereupon, with much anxiety and tearful eyes, he appealed to me:—"Eh, man, d'ye think that Lady Williamson keeps any whisky?" to which I replied instantly that I did not think but was quite certain on that point; accordingly the butler at my suggestion brought him a *petit verre* by which he was restored to entire comfort and well being.<sup>7</sup>

The social deportment of the Shepherd has been severely depicted and commented on by Mr. Lockhart, but the absence of conventional good breeding, at least in the earlier part of his life, is not to be wondered at, and the frankness of his confession and apology when made aware of any palpable transgression, more than atoned for such in the minds of his more generous friends. Take, for example, the following extract from a letter to my father:—"September 26, 1808. If you will be so kind as to impute my behaviour at this time to the effects of your own hospitality, and not to my natural bias, I promise—nay, I swear, never to offend you again in thought, word or deed." This promise was not kept, but the failure was acknowledged and repented of as we shall see.<sup>8</sup>

Hogg records that when he first conceived an ambition to follow in the footsteps of Burns he felt that he had more experience to write about "than ever ploughman had". It is true that he possessed an absolutely limitless knowledge of Border adventure and tradition. He had been raised among the most independent and sterling class of men upon British soil, and, being a shrewd observer, if not judge, of human character, his mind was stored with the material for fiction. He was fond of out-of-door life, and, tho he has left no such tender record as the anecdote that expresses Scott's love for the heather which he must see once a year or die, Hogg's frequent descriptions show his abounding love of nature. He

<sup>6</sup> Page 99.

<sup>7</sup> *Memoirs of a Literary Veteran*, Vol. 1, page 130.

<sup>8</sup> *Archibald Constable and his Literary Companions*, by his son Thomas Constable.

possessed especially the power of grasping for expression the crucial single detail of a scene, and his greatest descriptive power was in setting forth graphically such large changing scenery as is involved in the description of a lasting storm. The narrative of the great snow described in *Storms*, and of the terrible deluge of a cloudburst set forth in *Mr. Adamson of Laverhope* merit to be set side by side with the storms in *Copperfield* and *The Antiquary*.

He was crude but not rude in conversation.

. . . . a strange compound of boisterous roughness and refinement in expression, and these odd contrasts surprised strangers such as Moore and Ticknor. The former was shocked and the latter said his conversation was a perpetual contradiction of the exquisite delicacy of *Kilmeny*."

Says Mrs. S. C. Hall, writing of Hogg late in life:

I can recall James Hogg sitting on the sofa—his countenance flushed with the excitement and the "toddy"—(he had come to us from a dinner with Sir George Warrender, whom some wag spoke of as Sir George Provender) expressing wild earnestness, not, I thought, unmixed with irascibility. He was then, certainly, more like a buoyant Irishman, than a sturdy son of the soil of the thistle, as he shouted forth in an untunable voice, songs that were his own especial favorites, giving us some account of each at its conclusion. One I particularly remember—"The Women Folk". "Ha, ha!", he exclaimed, echoing our applause with his own broad hands, "that song, which I am often forced to sing to the leddies sometimes against my will, that song never will be sung so well again by anyone after I am done wi' it." . . . I remember Cunningham's comment, "That's because you have the nature in you."

The Shepherd's love of children and of animal pets was so unbounded that one is instinctively reminded of Southey. His writings are full of tender tributes to dogs, and he was a keen sportsman, both fisher and hunter. He knew the Bible thoroly and possessed an abiding and trusting faith in the Almighty. He was superstitious, and certainly more than half believed the wild, mysterious tales in which he took such great delight. Dreams especially seemed to interest him and many of his best stories turn upon a vision during sleep. So much has been quoted in this brief description that sounds in print detractive, that the chapter may fittingly end with a few general opinions that drop the unusual and often amusing vagaries of his character and tell what general impression this remarkable man made upon his contemporaries.

\* Scott's *Journal* page 118, footnote.

Among the few of many Scottish worthies of whom I give memories in these pages, surely I must not omit "the Ettrick Shepherd". How I should have enjoyed a day with him on the Braes of Yarrow. Even now, across all these years that I have passed, I can hear his hearty voice and jovial laugh, and see his sunburnt face not yet paled by a month of "merrie companie" in London. "I like to talk about myself", so begins his *Autobiography*. No doubt he was an egotist, but so is every shepherd when he talks of sheep; so is a mariner when he speaks of peril in sailing a ship; so are all men who dwell on matters which constitute their "personality", and which they understand better than others do. In short, so are all teachers. The accusation of egotism, and also that of plagiarism, are easily made, but are not so easy of proof. Few men have thoroughly triumphed over difficulties; none came more triumphantly out of them. James Hogg was a more marvellous man than Robert Burns; far less great as a poet, certainly; but marvellous in the dauntless energy with which he struggled against circumstances, yet more adverse than those of Burns, and reached—not an untimely grave, but a secure position in the world of letters. Hogg was as much as Southey "a man of letters by profession"; and surely one of the most remarkable men of the century that passed away when

"Ettrick mourned her shepherd dead."

A wrestle with fortune, indeed, was his! chequered yet successful, and marked during the whole of his fairly long life by good spirits, that were partly the result of a good constitution, and greatly, perhaps, derived from his sanguine self-esteem.

I remember one of the evenings he passed with us . . . . The visit of the Ettrick Shepherd to London took place in 1832. It is scarcely too much to say that the impression he produced in literary circles may be likened to that which might have been created by the temporary presence of Ben Nevis on Blackheath. A striking sight it was to see the Shepherd fêted in aristocratic *salons*, mingling with the learned and polite of all grades—clumsily, but not rudely. He was rustic without being coarse; not attempting to ape the refinement to which he was unused; but seemed perfectly aware that all eyes were upon him, and accepting admiration as a right.<sup>10</sup>

But it does not appear that his resentment was either deep or long-continued, though he speaks of never being able to forgive Wordsworth. Hogg was essentially a kindly, generous, and warm-affectioned man, capable of attaching to himself friends of very opposite characters; genial in society though not a brilliant or copious talker, and, in his own home at Altrive and Mount Benger, hospitable almost to a fault. Obviously, too, he was a loving and well-loved man in his home circle, where he found his best happiness. His shrewd views of people and things, and his quaint modes of expression, redolent of the vernacular of the Forest and tinged with poetry,—in a word, the singular individuality of his character made him an object of interest to numerous friends and acquaintances all over Britain.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> S. C. Hall.

<sup>11</sup> Professor Veitch.

While thus recalling for the amusement of an idle hour, some of the whimsical scenes in which we have met James Hogg, let it not be supposed that we think of him only with a regard to his homely manners, the social good nature, and the unimportant foibles by which he was characterised. The world amid which he moved was but too apt, especially of late years, to regard him in these lights alone, forgetting that beneath the rustic plaid there beat one of the kindest hearts and most unperverted of minds, while his bonnet covered the head from which sprung *Kilmeny* and *Donald MacDonald*. Hogg, as an untutored man, was a prodigy, much more so than Burns, who had comparatively a good education; and now that he is dead and gone, we look around in vain for a living hand capable of waking the national lyre.<sup>12</sup>

We remember among the things of this life that are worth remembering, his sturdy form, and shrewd, familiar face; his kindly greetings, and his social cheer, his summer angling, and his winter curling, his welcome presence at kirk and market, and Border game, and, above all, we remember how his gray eye sparkled as he sang, in his own simple and unadorned fashion, those rustic ditties in which a manly vigor of sentiment was combined with unexpected grace, sweetness and tenderness.<sup>13</sup>

There was a homely heartiness of manner about Hogg and a Doric simplicity in his address, which was exceedingly prepossessing. He sometimes carried a little too far the privileges of an innocent rusticity, as Mr. Lockhart has not failed to note in his life of Scott; but, in general his slight deviations from etiquette were rather amusing than otherwise. When we consider the disadvantages with which he had to contend, it must be admitted that Hogg was in all respects a very remarkable man. In his social hours, a naïvete, and a vanity that disarmed displeasure by the openness and good-humour with which it was avowed, played over the surface of a nature which at bottom was sufficiently shrewd and sagacious; but his conversational powers were by no means pre-eminent. He never indeed attempted any colloquial display, although there was sometimes a quaintness in his remarks, a glimmering of drollery, a rural freshness, and a tinge of poetical coloring, which redeemed his discourse from commonplace, and supplied to the consummate artist who took him in hand the hints out of which to construct a character<sup>14</sup> at once original, extraordinary, and delightful—a character of which James Hogg undoubtedly furnished the germ, but which, as it expanded under the hands of its artificer, acquired a breadth, a firmness and a power to which the bard of Mount Benger had certainly no pretension.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Robert Chambers.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Glassford Bell.

<sup>14</sup> Peeters to the Ettrick Shepherd in the *Noctes Ambrosianae*.

<sup>15</sup> Ferrier.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESIDENCE IN EDINBURGH

THE man whose character has been sketched in the preceding chapter set out, as has been related, to make his fortune in the capital as a man of letters. Enough has been already said to show how unsuited he was by training for the task he had undertaken. He had but few friends in the city and none who could be of much use to him. The better part of a year passed and he was unable to make any money; and, had it not been for the hospitality of an acquaintance he would have been in great practical straits at this time.

After much solicitation Mr. Constable was persuaded to undertake the publication of another volume of verse. *The Forest Minstrel*, as it was called, was dedicated to Lady Dalkeith, who sent Hogg, in consequence, a present of a hundred guineas; but this was all the profit he ever received. The book fell flat; and, in this case, the popular verdict was just criticism. For some years the Shepherd's time had been so taken up with his disastrous experiments in agriculture that he had had no time to write verse.

He had drawn upon the best of what he calls his "youthful songs" when he published *The Mountain Bard*, and he had but the refuse left to form into a new volume. There are some stanzas of merit to be found in *The Forest Minstrel* and some of the poems are better than others; but, on the whole, one does not find any difficulty in comprehending the contemporary unpopularity of the book—a judgment that time has not reversed.

Yet the poet who had just made such a failure was not to be put down by bad luck. His indomitable spirits and unlimited egotism came nobly to his rescue. If Mr. Jeffrey could conduct a review, why could not he, James Hogg, do the same with a weekly journal of literature and criticism? So, likely, he reasoned to himself. At any rate, he resolved to undertake such a task and *The Spy* resulted. To ordinary readers *The Spy* is quite inaccessible, there being not above half a dozen copies in existence, if there be so many. Therefore the present writer feels justified in commenting upon it in detail; for, in his opinion, it constitutes the Ettrick Shepherd's highest claim, if not to fame, at least to our admira-



tion for his character. We must remember, while reading the following extracts, that they were written by a man almost wholly unlearned, wholly undrilled, one who had educated himself, one who was suffering from actual privation and trial, not to speak of the bitter disappointment of futile hopes. Yet he wrote nearly every word of a weekly journal that ran successfully for a year, and which, had he but possessed a little more tact, would probably have developed into a successful venture.

He had much difficulty in getting started. No publisher would lend his name to the undertaking, and Hogg found it almost impossible to obtain a printer. At last he did secure one with whom he used to make his business arrangements over a glass of whisky in a mean tavern in the Cowgate. Hogg soon fell into bad habits, and his paper began to go down rapidly; but he had the good sense to see that this sort of thing would not do. He made a sudden resolve to break with his printer. Luck for once seemed to be with him. He immediately found another and, after No. XIV., we find the imprint of A & J Aikman, at The Star Office.

The paper sold for fourpence, and almost immediately Hogg possessed a subscription list that made his journal profitable. A perusal of *The Spy* would not only have saved one of Hogg's recent biographers from an amusing blunder in which he acknowledges never having heard of one of the Shepherd's most attractive fictions, but also affords the reader much entertainment and a complete insight into the mechanical details of much of Hogg's writing. There we find many papers often republished under different titles in later volumes; mere sketches that were later expanded into stories; and a succession of amusing adventures, quite disconnected and episodic in character, which were subsequently joined together in one long story. It is true, however, that *The Love Adventures of Mr. George Cochrane*, that thus came into existence, showed little, if any, constructive improvement.

The first number of *The Spy* contained a full and detailed account of the editor, an account, however, which is wholly fictitious, for Hogg was concerned to keep his connection with the paper an utter secret. With the fourth issue Hogg got into trouble. In one of the stories, a farmer, who tells his own adventures in a gay, trifling manner, seduces his serving-maid and continues to live with her as his mistress. The com-

motion this episode produced among the straight-laced dames of Edinburgh testifies to the warm reception the new periodical had received. An unknown sheet could never have raised such a nest of hornets. Their buzzing and stinging soon made Hogg perfectly aware of the error he had committed against propriety. The exercise of a little tact, a courteous withdrawal, and a promise for the future cleanliness that Mr. Wesley had rated so highly—and all might still have been well. But the editor was stubborn. He decided that he was the best judge of what should go into his weekly quarto. In any case, he reasoned, the story was not so very objectionable. So he persisted. It was not till the subscription dwindled lamentably that Hogg dropped the objectionable tone and purged his publication. It was too late. Ruin had been already wrought. From this point, so early in its career, the fate of *The Spy* was sealed. Hogg realized that it had become a mere question of how long he could keep himself afloat. The struggle against adversity nerved him to some of his finest lyric poetry, as well as short tales in prose. We find the first draft of *A Peasant's Funeral* and *The Dreadful Story of McPherson*; such lyrics as *The Fall of the Leaf*, *Poor Little Jessie*, *Fair Was Thy Blossom*, etc., etc.; as well as a series of articles that deserve special mention.

Mr. Shuffleton's *Allegorical Survey of the Scottish Poets of the Present Day* was also offensive, but from a very different reason than that which halved the circulation. Mr. Shuffleton was a show-master who brought puppets upon the stage to dance for the public. These puppets were meant to represent the editor's fellow-poets. The man who could write that wonderful literary forgery, *The Poetic Mirror*, must have been a keen observer of style even if not a sane critic. It was the accuracy of the burlesque puppets that gave such widespread offense. Here is Hogg's description of himself:

The music now changed to a strain a great deal more simple [the preceding puppet represented Campbell] but perfectly regular, and still very sweet. As soon as I heard it I formed to myself an idea of what kind of a figure was next to be presented to our notice. We were not kept long in suspense. A country looking girl soon entered, whose countenance exhibited a good deal of sweetness and animation; and she was dressed in what she supposed would pass for the most elegant simplicity. Had her dress been equally elegant, and her ornaments rightly arranged, she might have passed for a beauty in her degree; but unfortunately this was not the case. The great circle of spectators

having been so dazzled with the splendor of the last two ladies [Scott and Campbell] did not deign to look on this with so much attention; not one appeared to view her with contempt, but only a few took particular notice of her, and these few seemed highly pleased with her. At her first entrance she was dressed in a mantle, somewhat resembling the dress of the first lady [Scott] but, finding that it rather encumbered her, she threw it off and appeared in the dress of a native shepherdess, which became her a great deal better. In this garb she accompanied the music with her voice, which indeed was melodious; and observing that this by degrees drew the attention of the crowd, she sung a great many of her native airs, which she performed with spirit and considerable facility; at one time falling into true, simple pathos, at another melting into the tender love ditty, and again bursting into a merry and comic strain.

I had been listening with so much attention to this minstrel of the mountain, that I had not till now observed that she was attended by an old faithful colly which she seemed very anxious should be taken notice of. This made her rather the more interesting: and I must say of her, what cannot be said of all these ladies, that, in proportion to the minuteness of our inspection, our good opinion of her increased. The main body of the crowd still remained insensible to her charms, or, if they really admired her, would not acknowledge it, as thinking it rather below them to seem interested in a girl so low bred.

"What a pity it is", said I, "Sir, that this girl is not more attentive to her dress, which is more singular as she does not seem to want taste." "A self-willed imp", said he, "who thinks more of her accomplishments than any other body does; and, because her taste is natural, thinks it infallible, and every person wrong who does not acquiesce in her opinion. Pray make the observation to herself, and see how ill she takes it." "Shepherdess", said I, "you little know what a blemish you throw upon one of the sweetest creatures in the world by that marked and affected negligence of dress" (for I wished to begin softly with her). She made a slight and awkward curtsy: "I think I sude ken as weel as you, or ony like ye, what suits my ain form an features", said she tartly; and looking back addressed her dog: "Come away, my poor fellow; you an' me disna mak a good appearance amang a' these pridefu' fock." So saying, she vanished in a moment. "She is hurt", said my friend, "and I am glad to see it: guilt never appears so evident as by the person taking it ill when charged with it; and the first and best mark of reformation is conviction. I will lay any bet that this shepherdess will pay more attention to the regularity and elegance of her dress in future, and learn by experience that cooks must not always make dishes to their own taste."

Enough of Mr. Shuffleton. *The Spy* continued to appear and the incessant labor of writing so many pages was just the sort of practical drill the Shepherd needed. Had he not had this year of experience he could never have written the novels, some of which are known in certain parts of the Border almost

as well as Scott's. But, as has been said, the paper was doomed. There is something dramatic in the fact that it died on the anniversary of its birth. Just one year of life was all that befell *The Spy*. And there is much that is pathetic in the shepherd's earnest, withal dignified, farewell to his readers. He was no longer anxious to conceal his secret and he talked plainly of his defeat in manly terms. No edition of Hogg's works should be published without including, at least, the last number of *The Spy*; and, as all but the name of this publication seems to have escaped the interest of editors and biographers alike, the present memoir will present a few additional extracts:

His [*The Spy's*] efforts have, without doubt, met with at least as much encouragement as they deserved; he frankly acknowledges that the encouragement has not been much to boast of; as his name became known the number of his subscribers diminished. The learned, the enlightened, and polite circles of this flourishing metropolis, disdained either to be amused or instructed by the ebullitions of humble genius; enemies, swelling with the most rancorous spite, grunted in every corner; and from none has *The Spy* suffered so much injury and blame, as from some pretended friends, who were indeed liberal in their advices, and ardent in their professions of friendship, yet took every method in their power to lessen the work in the esteem of others, by branding its author with designs the most subversive of all civility and decorum, and which, of all others, were the most distant from his heart. . . .

There have still, however, been a few, and not a very few either, who have stood *The Spy's* most strenuous advocates through good report, and through bad report. Of these he has been careful to preserve the names, and these names he will ever cherish with the most grateful remembrance; and were he certain they would regret the discontinuation of *The Spy*, and feel the same disappointment on missing it on a Saturday evening, that they would do on being deprived of an old friend or dependent, whose conversation, though not without faults, was become familiar and dear to them, he would, in his turn, experience sensations such as none save an enthusiast in the pursuits of literature can enjoy; and he may surely be allowed to indulge the hope so congenial to the soul of every candidate for literary honours, that the awards of posterity will in part justify that cause which his friends have maintained against such odds. They have had, at all events, the honour of patronising an undertaking, quite new in the records of literature; for that a common shepherd that never was at school, who went to service at seven years of age, and could neither read nor write with accuracy when twenty, yet who, smitten with an unconquerable thirst after knowledge, should run away from his master, leave his native mountains, and his flocks to wander where they chose, come to the metropolis with his plaid wrapped about his shoulders, and all at once

set up for a connoisseur in manners, taste, and genius, has certainly much more the appearance of romance than a matter of fact. Yet a matter of fact it certainly is, and such a person is the editor of *The Spy*.

He, indeed, expected no indulgence on that score, which he testified by giving his papers, even to his intimate acquaintances, anonymously; . . . his first printer and publisher did not even know who the editor was. . . .

He is, however, willing to believe, that these considerations will account in part for some inadvertencies that raised such a prejudice against *The Spy* on its first outset. It is hoped the candid reader will easily discover that these never have proceeded from the slightest intention of injuring the cause of virtue and truth, but either from inattention or mere simplicity of heart. . . .

Thus far may be said in justification of those papers that in no one instance is the cause of religion, virtue, or benevolence injured or violated, but always encouraged, however ineffectively; therefore, though *The Spy* merits not admiration, he is at least entitled to kindness for his good intentions. . . .

The papers which have given the greatest personal offence, are those of Mr. Shufleton, which clamour obliged the editor reluctantly to discontinue. Of all the poets and poetesses whose works are there emblematically introduced, one gentleman alone stood the test, and his firmness was even by himself attributed to forgiveness; all the rest, male and female, tossed up their noses, and pronounced the writer an ignorant and incorrigible barbarian. The *Spy* acknowledges himself the author of these papers, and adheres to the figurative characters which he has there given of the poetical works of these authors. He knows that it is expected in a future edition that they will all be altered—but they never shall—though the entreaties of respected friends prevailed on him to relinquish a topic which was his favorite one. What he has published, he has published; and no private considerations shall induce him to an act of such apparent servility, as that of making a renunciation; and these who are so grossly ignorant as to suppose the figurative characteristics of the poetry, as having the smallest reference to the personal characters of the authors of these poems, are below arguing with. . . .

The character of a writer, especially of a periodical writer, has at least ten chances for being blasted for one of attaining eminence. He solicits the regard of a multitude fluctuating in pleasures or immersed in business, without time for intellectual amusements. He appeals to judges o'erpossessed by passions, or corrupted by prejudices, which preclude their approbation of any new performance. Many are too indolent to read anything till its reputation is established, others too envious to promote that fame which gives them pain by its increase. What appears new is opposed, because most are unwilling to be taught; and what is known is rejected, because it is not sufficiently considered, that men more frequently require to be reminded than informed. The learned are afraid to declare their opinions early, lest they should put their reputation to hazard; the ignorant always imagine themselves giving some proof of delicacy when they refuse to be pleased; and he

that finds his way through all these obstructions, must acknowledge that he is indebted to other causes besides his industry, originality, or wit. . . .

Surely, he that has been confined from his infancy to the conversation of the lowest classes of mankind, must necessarily want those accomplishments which are the usual means of attracting favor; and, though truth, fortitude, and probity may be supposed to give an indisputable right to respect and kindness, they will not be distinguished by common eyes, unless they are brightened by elegance, but must be cast aside as unpolished gems of which none but the artist knows the intrinsic value. . . .

The world has a thousand times witnessed what mighty things can be accomplished by the assistance of learning, but it has never yet ascertained how much may be accomplished without it. The pleasure, then, of making the experiment, though in a branch of literature that some may ridicule, and others despise, offers him sufficient inducement for perseverance. The chief art of attaining eminence in anything, is to attempt little at a time. The widest excursions of the mind are made by short flights often repeated; the most lofty fabrics of science have been formed by the continued accumulations of single propositions—the Spy may be worsted—he shall never be discouraged.

Hogg's next venture was to form a public debating society called the Forum. Its history is fully set forth in the *Autobiography* and need not be set down here. To the Forum, Hogg attributed much of his skill of feeling the public pulse, a trait he believed himself to possess in an eminent degree, but of which he gave little evidence. Some of the amusing incidents concerning this society gave rise to the *Forum, A Tragedy for Cold Weather*, which, however, was never published. It was at the Forum that Hogg became acquainted with a Mr. Goldie, who subsequently published *The Queen's Wake*, and whose sudden failure constituted another link in Hogg's chain of financial disaster. At this time (1812) a few copies were printed of *The Hunting of Badlewe*, under the nom de plume of J. H. Craig, of Douglas, after which Hogg gave up writing for the stage. Subsequently, however, he put forth, in 1817, two volumes of *Dramatic Tales*, which were merely dramatic dialogues untrammelled with dramatic structure. They neither merited nor received attention.

Hogg's personal acquaintance was steadily growing among the literary lights of Edinburgh, among which class, however, no one yet thought of classing him. *The Isle of Palms* appeared in 1812, and Hogg's enthusiastic review of this poem brought him into contact with Christopher North, whom he

visited at Elleray many times in subsequent years. The acquaintance thus begun between the Shepherd and Professor Wilson was sincere, and, with one short exception, lasting. The white-haired professor of philosophy was the most striking figure as well as the most affected mourner in that slow train that wended its way twenty years later, along the Heart Leap Road, down by Tushielaw to Ettrick Kirk. Thru Wilson's means grew up a friendship between Hogg and Robert Southey; also an acquaintance with Wordsworth; but the poet of Rydal Mount on one occasion spoke contemptuously of Hogg's power as a poet and Wordsworth was never forgiven by the touchy Shepherd.

The fate of *The Forest Minstrel* had not discouraged Hogg. He now became desirous of publishing another volume of verse. He had recently written a good deal, and, rather than lose it, hastily joined it together into a long narrative poem of very loose structure. The story of *The Queen's Wake* is simple: Mary Queen of Scots arrives in Scotland and decides to have a poetic contest in which all the bards of Scotland are to take part. They meet, contest for three days, and the victor is judged. The major part of the production consists of the songs sung by the bards. It was merely as a pretext for joining together these already-written songs that Hogg hit upon the plan of the Wake.

The history of its publication may be told here to the end. Constable agreed to the undertaking. Goldie, of Forum acquaintance, gave a better offer; Hogg transferred the volume and offended Constable in consequence. The book was a tremendous success and made Hogg instantly famous; but, before he had reaped any pecuniary benefits Goldie failed and Hogg became bankrupt. Yet this misfortune was not wholly without its advantage for it was in the capacity of one of Goldie's executors that Mr. Blackwood was introduced to the Shepherd.

One finds in this poem many false rhymes. Doubtless Hogg justified himself in this practice by the similar fault in the poetry of his idol, Scott. The verse of *The Queen's Wake* is far more monotonous than Scott's, the Shepherd not having learned the advantage to be derived from variety of rhyme and meter. In the course of the poem Hogg often clumsily refers to himself, and there are other minor faults. Yet, in spite of these, one bows in wonder and admiration before such a poem or series of poems from such a man. Queen Mary is

brilliantly described on her return to Scotland from France. One of the finest qualities is the description of each bard that precedes his song. Each one is thoroly different from all the others, and is not only vividly painted but also in complete harmony with the tone of the song he sings. Above all, *The Queen's Wake* contains the two songs upon which Hogg's reputation as a poet could rest alone and not diminish. *Kilmeny* and *The Witch of Fife* are not only the best of Hogg's productions, but the best of the kind in our language. No one has ever touched the supernatural so supernaturally. No wonder that Hogg sprang with one leap into renown! All Edinburgh read the poem breathlessly. Everyone wanted to know the author of *Kilmeny*. People asked themselves how it happened that he had been among them all this time like a light under a bushel. They began to recognize at this tardy hour the excellence of *The Spy*. People shook the Shepherd by the hand, invited him to their houses, and showed him off.

At last, in the following year, *The Edinburgh Review* published an article from which the following quotation is taken. From the date of this criticism Hogg may be considered as an established man of letters.

It ought also be recorded to his honour that he has uniformly sought this success by the fairest and most manly means; and that neither poverty nor ambition has been able to produce in him the slightest degree of obsequiousness towards the possessors of glory or of power; or events subdue in him a certain disposition to bid defiance to critics and to hold poets and patrons equally cheap and familiar; and to think that they can in general give no more honour than they receive from his acquaintance. These traits, we think, are unusual in men whom talents have raised out of a humble condition of society—especially when they are unaccompanied as in the present instance, either with any inherent insolence of character, or any irregularities of private life; and therefore we have thought it right to notice them. But at all events, the merit of the volume before us, is such as to entitle it to our notice; and as the author has fairly fought his way to that distinction, we are not disposed to withhold from him either the additional notoriety that it may still be in our power to bestow, or the admonition that may enable him still further to improve a talent that has already surprised us so much by its improvement. . . .

Mr. Hogg has undoubtedly many of the qualifications of a poet—great powers of versification—an unusual copiousness and facility in the use of poetical diction and imagery—a lively conception of natural beauty—with a quick and prolific fancy to body forth his conceptions. With all this, however, he is deficient in some more substantial req-



uisites. There is a sensible want of incident, and character, and pathos, about all his compositions. . . .

Mr. Hogg's *forte* consists in the striking representation of supernatural occurrences, or of the more imposing aspects of external nature;— and we certainly consider his narratives of less marvellous events, as of inferior merit. His descriptions, however, are always brilliant and copious; though frequently drawn out to such a length, as to become in some degree tedious and languid.<sup>1</sup>

Commendation poured in fast from all sides. His brother poets welcomed him. Southey was enthusiastic. Scott befriended him more than ever. Mr. Blackwood was such a successful executor of Goldie's affairs that Hogg eventually made a neat sum out of the sale of the book. So, in every way, Hogg had good reason to look upon his Edinburgh sojourn with the pride of success achieved under the greatest of difficulties.

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<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, November, 1811, page 151, etc.

## CHAPTER 5

### LIFE AT ALTRIVE LAKE

IN the summer of 1814 Hogg, while upon one of his numerous trips to the Highlands, was for some time laid up with a cold at Kinnaird House in Athole, the residence of Mr. Chalmers Izett. It was while here that Mrs. Izett proposed to Hogg that he do something to "prevent his mind from rusting". The result of this suggestion is *Mador of the Moor*, a poem that contains much commendable description, but of which the structure is so loose and the matter so commonplace that it adds little or nothing to its author's reputation. At the time, however, it was passably well received, and Hogg was gratified by the following letter<sup>1</sup> from the Duke of Buccleugh:

Penrich, May 7, 1816.

Sir,

I return you my thanks for your present of *Mador of the Moor*. This poem has gratified and amused me much. I do not pretend to be a critic, or judge of poetry in proportion to the interest it creates in me. I shall therefore only add that *Mador* shall be immediately re-read as soon as the different individuals of my family shall have perused it, a period at no great distance.

Your friend and well-wisher,

Buccleugh, &c.

Hogg's celebrity was now sufficient to warrant the painting of a portrait. Nicholas was at work upon it in 1815; and on St. Valentine's Day Hogg addressed a letter<sup>2</sup> to his friend Laidlaw.

Dear Laidlaw,

If I cannot procure Lion before this day eight days, I am positively condemned to sit ages and centuries in company with a butcher's collie, in the town, as unlike my strumpit whelp as I to Hercules. If you can submit to this, why, then, I must; but positively I shall never look at my own picture. If I were to come myself I have no time to stay, for the artist says he would not that my picture were not in the exhibition this year for 50 pounds, and he cannot give it a tone until the figures are adjusted. Two nights and a day are quite sufficient for Rob to stay here, and in that case he will get the dog home with him.

Yours ever.—J. H.

<sup>1</sup> Published by Mrs. Garden, page 106.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Mrs. Garden, page 83.

Mrs. Garden quotes another interesting letter, which not only alludes to Hogg's next important work, *The Poetic Mirror*, but also details in amusing fashion his relation to Lord Byron.

London, April 10, 1815.

My Dear Friend,

I entreat you not to ascribe to inattention the delay which has occurred in my answer to your kind and interesting letter. Much more, I beg you not to entertain for a moment a doubt about the interest which I take in your writings, or the exertions which I shall ever make to promote their sale and popularity. I can express no word of praise equal to my estimation of the *The Queen's Wake*, which is, I believe, not less admired by all who have read it. . . .

They are each selling every day, and I have no doubt that they will both be out of print in two months. It is really no less absurd than malicious, to suppose that I do not advertise, and by every other means strive to sell these works, in which I am so much interested.

Respecting the collection of poems, I really think Lord Byron may, in a little time, most certainly be relied on as a contributor. He continued to be exceedingly friendly to you in all respects; and it will be reciprocity of kindness in you to make large allowance for such a man. Newly married—consider the entire alteration which it has occasioned in his habits and occupations, and the flood of distracting engagements and duties of all kinds which have attended it. He is just come to town, and is in every respect, I think, very greatly improved. I wish you had been with me on Friday last, when I had the honour of presenting Scott to him for the first time. This I consider as a commemorative event in literary history, and I sincerely regret that you were not present. I wish you had dashed up to London at once, and if you will do so immediately, I will undertake to board you, if you will get a bed, which can easily be obtained in my neighborhood, and everybody will be glad to see you.

Could you not write a poetical epistle, a lively one, to Lady Byron, congratulating her on her marriage? She is a good mathematician, writes poetry, understands French, Italian, Latin, and Greek—and tell her that, as she has prevented Lord Byron from fulfilling his promise to you, she is bound to insist upon its execution; and to add a poem of her own to it by way of interest. She is a most delightful creature, and possesses excellent temper and a most inordinate share of good sense. . . .

Your faithful friend

Jno. Murray.

Mr. James Hogg.

In this year occurred another momentous change in the Shepherd's life, namely, his permanent return to the vale of Yarrow. Shortly before, he had dedicated *The Forest Minstrel* to the Duchess of Buccleugh, not without hope of patron-

age more substantial than gratitude. Hogg imagined that this hope was utterly beyond fulfilment when the news reached him of the Duchess's death in August, 1814. The good woman, however, had not forgotten the poetic shepherd of her husband's dukedom. Her dying request was in behalf of Hogg, a request that was answered by the Duke's grant to Hogg, rent free, of the small farm of Altrive Lake.

Hogg wrote on January 29, 1815:<sup>3</sup>

Dear Laidlaw, the weather seems so uncertain and broken that I believe I must postpone my journey to Traquair, and for some time, although Nicholson is out of all patience for the dog, and was perfectly in raptures when he heard that I was coming out for him. It is strange that I cannot get him in.

You have won your shilling. There was scarcely one-third of the club counted above me in our play for the medal. . . . With regard to the making of my new curling stones, you need not much mind until we see where we are to play next year, for yesterday I was waited on by Major Riddell (the Duke's factor) who delivered me a letter from the Duke of Buccleugh, granting me in the most kind and flattering manner the farm of the Moss-end (Altrive Lake), without any rent, or with what his Grace calls a nominal rent. The Major was extremely polite, and said that he had never been commissioned to confirm any grant that gave him more pleasure, and that he wished much to be better acquainted with me. He said it was a pity it was not better worth my acceptance, but that it was the only place vacant, and would do for the present as a retreat. He mentioned the exchange with the Craig, which was to take place, and said that whatever fell to the Duke's share, would of course fall to me. This I knew would be a mistake but as "a gi'en horse sudna be lookit i' the mouth" I only said that with all these arrangements I would take no concern. I have written to his Grace to-day, shortly acknowledging the benefit conferred. You must get word to my father who will be very uneasy.

Yours truly,

James Hogg.

On May 7, 1815, Hogg took possession of the farm he was to occupy, with the exception of one short removal to an adjacent farm, till his death. The cottage itself was in a woeful state of disrepair, so open, in fact, that when visitors came, "All the plaids were hung up around the door as a screen from the cold." Here he lived for some time with his aged father (his mother had died at Ettrickhall in 1813) and a country servant-maid whose "rusticity must often have amused some of his more fastidious friends". (Mrs. Garden.)

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Mrs. Garden, page 81.

Before long he set about the task of building a new cottage, the need of which is shown by the following:

On Tuesday morning I walked to Hogg's, a distance of about eight miles, fishing as I went, and surprised him in his cottage bottling whisky. He is well and dressed pastorally. His house is not habitable, but the situation is good, and may become pretty. There being no beds in his domicile, we last night came here, a farmer's house about a quarter of a mile from him, where I have been treated most kindly and hospitably.'

Hogg's one injunction to the architect of the new cottage was so to design the building that all the smoke would come out of one chimney. His sudden access of fame had subjected him to a press of visitors, "trippers" we should call them now, and his architectural suggestion was his way of fooling them into the notion that no one was at home save the occupant of the kitchen. His brilliant idea, however, was not successful, and, before long, Altrive Lake became the constant meeting-place of all the intellectual men of the Scottish Border: truly a Mermaid tavern in the midst of Elysian Fields.

The country round about Yarrow was even more isolated in those days than it is at present. He writes in 1819:

I see your letter is of old date, and yet it is several days since I got it; but at this season I am quite secluded almost from the possibility of communication with this world, it being only by chance that I get my letters at all; and I do not even know if I shall get this away to the post.

In fact, the usual way of reaching Altrive Lake from Edinburgh was by the Peebles Coach to Peebles, then a six-mile journey to Innerleithen, and the remaining seven miles, often afoot to Altrive. Until many years subsequent to this time there were few, practically no, carriage roads in either the Ettrick or Yarrow valleys.

The first gig ever introduced into Yarrow parish was that of Mr. Thomas Milne, who came as tenant to Dryhope in 1812. He was lame and could not ride, and such an unusual luxury was for that reason excused in a farmer. . . . The farm houses were thatched, small, and low-roofed. They were on one model—a room in one end, the kitchen in the other, and through the kitchen another room used as a bedroom, with, perhaps, two small attics above, reached by a trap ladder, and lighted by a few small panes through the thatch. I remember Ladhope, Mt. Benger [later occupied by Hogg], Newhouse, and Newburgh, being in this style. . . . The cottages for the hinds and shepherds were little better than dark smoky hovels. Their walls were of

' Letter from Wilson to his wife.

alternate rows of stones and sods, their floor of earth, and their roof of coarse timber covered with earth and rushes. A hole in the middle or end of the roof, surrounded at the top by a wicker frame widening as it came down, plastered with a mixture of straw and mud, and supported by a strong beam, was the only chimney. If the rain or snow occasionally found entrance through this open space, it allowed of a number of persons gathering round the glowing peat fire, and was convenient for smoking hams. A small aperture with a single pane of glass, and sometimes altogether open, was stuffed at night with old clothes, and was the only apology for a window. Occasionally the byre might be seen on one side of the entrance, the family apartment, which served alike for eating and sleeping, on the other. With such limited resources the box beds with shelves within were made a receptacle for all possible odds and ends; while, contrary to all sanitary arrangements, potatoes in heaps were stored beneath. It was quite a rare thing to have a *but* and *ben* for the exclusive use of the household.<sup>5</sup>

Hogg's life at Altrive was very simple. In 1816 he writes to Mr. Blackwood:

You may think me ungrateful for not writing to you as I promised, especially as you have been so mindful of me; but once you see how barren my letter is, you will think different. There is not an article here that can have any interest to a citizen; for though there are a number of blackcocks, muir-fowl, &c., on our hills, there are such a crew of idle fellows (mostly from Edinburgh, I dare say) broke loose on them to-day, that it seems to a peaceful listener at a distance like me as if the French were arrived at the Forest. Yet all this and everything that I have in my power to mention, you know must take place of course. In fact, the people of Edinburgh should always write to their friends in the country, and never expect any answer. For my part, I know that all the letters I ever received from the country while I was there, were most insipid, nor can it otherwise be. We converse only with the elements, and our concerns are of the most trivial and simple nature. For my part, I feel myself so much at home here, and so much in the plain rustic state in which I spent my early years, that I have even forgot to think or muse at all, and my thoughts seem as vacant as the wilderness around me. I even wonder at some of my own past ideas. I have neither written nor corrected a line since I left Edinburgh, and as I never intend returning to it for any length of time, I think I may safely predict without the spirit of prophecy, that you have seen the best and most likely all, of my productions that you will ever see. They have gained me but little fame and far less profit; and certainly the most graceful way of giving up the contest is to retire indignant into my native glens, and consort with the rustic friends of my early youth. This is no *rodomontade*, my dear sir, but the genuine sentiments of my heart at this time. Do not, however, neglect to favor me still with a reading of all new works in my way. I will return the *Melodies*, but I will keep this and the future numbers of the *Review*, and you or Mur-

<sup>5</sup> Russell's *Reminiscences of Yarrow*.

ray may debit me with it as cheap as you like. . . . We have no post nor any carrier from this, and I neither know how nor when I am to get this letter carried.

I take the half of my last sheet of paper to write to you a few lines, and implore you not to insist on my coming to town just yet. Believe me, you do not know what you ask. It is cruel in the extreme. Can I leave my fine house, my gray-hounds, my curling-stones, my silver punch-bowl and mug, my country friends, my sister and my sweetheart, to come and plunge into general dissipation? And, worst of all, can I leave home, a house made by my own hand, and the most snug and comfortable, perhaps, that ever was made, to be a lodger in the house of another, my own ingle-cheek, dish and night-gown, with my parents [waiting] assiduously on me—only to be a pest to others or to pay horridly for lodgings and keep the same establishment at home? I know it is all kindness and affection in you; but they are misdirected, for everyone who wishes me to spend my life happily would wish me to spend it at home. Besides, I cannot take my hand in managing the publication, or pushing the sale of my own works. If delicacy even permitted it, I am the worst hand in the world to do such a thing. Further than the proofs I can do nothing. You are right. The magazine is a most excellent one.

The rains have been prodigious. Ettrick and Yarrow have almost laid their banks waste. I built a small inn on my farm last year, that everybody who was thirsty might get a drink when he liked. About midnight on the 2d, the man who keeps it was alarmed by a rushing sound as of many waters, but as the Yarrow runs at a distance of a quarter of a mile, he laid him down again. In a few minutes after, the waves began to break over the bedclothes in good earnest, on which he sprang up and carried out all his family, one by one, in water to the neck, and they escaped naked and in great dismay to my farmhouse of Mount Benger. No lives were lost but the cat's. She was found drowned on the floor next day.

After five years of residence at Altrive, Hogg was married to Margaret Phillips. As much as ten years before this time, Hogg had met Miss Phillips at the house of his friend Mr. James Gray of Edinburgh, whose first wife was Margaret Phillips' sister. A mutual attachment grew up between the two which, however, did not ripen into love till the more settled circumstances of Hogg's condition that followed his settlement at Altrive. The story of this period of the Shepherd's life has been written for the public only by his daughter in her *Memoir*. The reader is referred to that volume, which is again in print and therefore easily accessible. Much of his correspondence relating to this period is there reproduced. Writes Mrs. Garden:

So, in April, 1820, Hogg went to Dumfriesshire, and in the old mansion house of Mousewald Place, where Mr. Phillips, having retired from business, was then residing, was married to his Margaret.<sup>6</sup>

Hogg did not find the pathway to marriage altogether smooth. He was now fifty years of age, and the correspondence shows that this fact gave him frequent misgivings. Suspicion and jealousy were rife from time to time, and once almost culminated in a serious quarrel. True love, however, surmounts such trivial rubs, and, once married, Hogg and his wife settled down to the most happy and mutually dependent of lives.

Almost the first occupation of Mrs. Hogg after her removal to Altrive was to nurse her husband; but his illness at this time was amusing rather than serious, for, at the age of fifty, he was taken down with the measles.

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<sup>6</sup> Page 115.



## CHAPTER 6

### THE POETIC MIRROR, ETC.

THE removal from Edinburgh to Altrive necessitated a certain expenditure of money in stocking the farm. Hogg was bankrupt at the time, and he prepared *The Poetic Mirror* in order to make the money needed to stock his new farm. His plan was to issue a volume of poems, each poem written by one of the leading popular poets of the day. Many of them were quick to promise assistance, and Byron originally intended *Lyra* for *The Poetic Mirror*; but few of Hogg's brother bards were as quick to redeem as to give their promises, and Scott absolutely refused to have anything to do with the venture.

This refusal was the cause of their only serious quarrel. Hogg counted upon Scott's contribution as equivalent to the success of the volume. Scott refused to contribute because he considered it unwise and unmanly for Hogg to make money out of other people's work. Hogg's hasty temper, however, caused him to imagine that Scott's refusal was mere discourtesy. He wrote Scott an abusive letter and they were quite estranged for several months. Says Hogg:

I could not even endure to see him at a distance, I felt so degraded by the refusal, and I was at that time more disgusted with all mankind than I have ever been before, or have ever been since.

The result of this quarrel is related below in the words of Mr. Thomson.

It must have been about this time that the Ettrick Shepherd became a member of the Right and Wrong Club. The present was still a transition period of Scottish Society, in which much of the wildness and irregularity of the latter part of the eighteenth century continued to linger; even the embers of the Hellfire Club were not yet wholly extinguished; and *symposia* were frequent among literary characters and men of mark, which only forty years after would have been eschewed by the common people as disreputable. It was not therefore surprising that the social unsuspecting disposition of the Shepherd should involve him in some one of these vortices, and that for a season he should be whirled about in its giddy revolutions. This Right and Wrong Club was established one evening at dinner, and among some choice spirits, tainted with the leaven of the old school, with their entertainer, a young lawyer, afterwards a distinguished barrister, at their head; and their principle of association was, that whatever any of its members should

assert, was to be supported by the whole fraternity, whether *right* or *wrong*. The idea was so delightful, that they met next day at Oman's Hotel, to celebrate the formation of the club; they dined at five o'clock, and separated at two in the morning; and such was the hilarity which had prevailed among these mad revellers, most of them men of scholarship and genius, as well as bacchanals, that they agreed to have a daily meeting of the same kind. It is needless to add that such a paroxysm could not be lasting; and during five or six weeks over which these quotidian meetings extended, some of the members drank themselves into derangement, while others rushed headlong into engagements that ended in marriage. As for Hogg, whose head needed little stimulus beyond the poetry that was in it, he was soon laid up by inflammatory fever, which was not abated by their sympathetic visits, often made at two or three o'clock in the morning, after their meeting dissolved, and when they were in such a hazy or mischievous condition, that they generally broke all the knockers and bell-handles in the stair, amidst their search for the right door. Finding that in spite of their attentions their poet laureate did not recover, the Right and Wrong Club held a consultation upon the subject; and as their deliberation was probably at an early hour of the evening, they wisely resolved to discontinue their meetings until he joined them, and should that never happen, never to meet again. By this resolution, to which they stoutly adhered, the club was broken up. It was probably the last monstrosity of the kind by which the past history of Edinburgh is disfigured.

This severe attack of illness, by which the Shepherd was confined three weeks in bed had almost proved fatal, and was only surmounted by the strength of his constitution and the care of a skilful physician. In the meantime, Sir Walter Scott had heard of his illness; and although all intercourse between them had ceased, he never failed to call every day at *Messers*. Grieve and Scott's to inquire for the patient on his return from his official duties at Parliament House. Nor were these mere calls of ceremony, for one day, taking Mr. Grieve aside, he asked him if Hogg had proper attendance and good medical advice? Mr. Grieve assured him that he had both, and that in the doctor the patient had implicit confidence. "I would fain have called upon him", rejoined Sir Walter, "but I knew not how I would be received. I request, however, that he may have every proper attendance and want for nothing that can contribute to the restoration of his health. And in particular, I have to request that you will let no pecuniary consideration whatever prevent his having the best medical advice in Edinburgh, for I shall see it paid. Poor Hogg! I would not for all that I am worth in the world that anything serious should befall him." Mr. Grieve, as desired kept the secret, so that it was not till some time afterwards that the Shepherd by accident, got information of this interview. He was struck with the kindness of Sir Walter, and afflicted with the thought that he had quarrelled with such a friend, so that he could not rest until he had attempted a reconciliation. The result of this penitent and relenting feeling was the following characteristic letter:—

"To Walter Scott, Esq., Castle Street.

"Gabriel Road, February 28, 1815.

"Mr. Scott,—I think it is great nonsense for two men who are friends at heart, and who ever must be so—indeed it is not in the nature of things that they can be otherwise—should be professed enemies.

"Mr. Grieve and Mr. Laidlaw, who were very severe on me, and to whom I was obliged to show your letter, have long ago convinced me that I mistook part of it, and that it was not me you held in such contempt, but the opinion of the public. The idea that you might mean that (though I still think the reading will bear either construction), has given me much pain; for I knew I answered yours intemperately, and in a mortal rage. I meant to have inclosed yours, and begged of you to return mine, but I cannot find it, and am sure that some one to whom I have been induced to show it has taken it away. However, as my troubles on that subject were never like to wear to an end, I could not longer resist telling you that I am extremely vexed about it. I desire not a renewal of our former intimacy, for haply, after what I have written, your family would not suffer it; but I wish it to be understood that, when we meet *by chance*, we might shake hands, and speak to one another as old acquaintances, and likewise that we may exchange a letter occasionally, for I find there are many things which I yearn to communicate to you, and the tears rush to my eyes when I consider that I may not.

"If you allow of this, pray let me know; and if you do not, let me know. Indeed, I am anxious to hear from you, for 'as the day of trouble is with me, so shall my strength be.' To be friends, *from the teeth forwards* is common enough; but it strikes me that there is something still more ludicrous in the reverse of the picture, and so to be enemies:—and why should I be, *from the teeth forwards*, yours sincerely,

"James Hogg?"

This curious epistle, so indicative of pride struggling with shame in confessing a fault and craving forgiveness, was rightly estimated; and Scott instead of parading a lecture in return, answered by a short note, desiring him to think no more about the matter, and come to breakfast next morning. The pair, so strangely dissimilar, and yet in many points so alike, were united once more, and perhaps their renewed friendship was all the stronger for the interruption. But still, though desired to think no more about it, Hogg could not rest without an explanation of the quarrel, and on the day of that morning, he introduced it, while they walked round St. Andrew Square; but Scott parried the subject. The attempt was renewed by the Shepherd a few days after, in Sir Walter's study; but the latter again eluded it with such dexterity, that Hogg was left in the dark as before, and obliged to conjecture what could be the cause of the other's peremptory refusal of a contribution to *The Poetic Mirror*. This guess, however, did full honor to the character of Scott. "I knew him too well", he says, "to have the least suspicion that there could be any selfish or unfriendly feeling in the determination which he adopted, and I can account for it in no other way.

than by supposing that he thought it mean in me to attempt either to acquire gain, or a name, by the efforts of other men; and that it was much more honorable, to use a proverb of his own, 'that every herring should hang by its own head'.<sup>1</sup>

Meantime our attention has been diverted from the cause of the quarrel. Hogg, in looking over the contributions that had been sent in to form part of *The Thistle and the Rose*, as he first intended to call *The Poetic Mirror*, found that the contributions were not only few in number but poor in quality. His disappointment was great, but short-lived. His mighty self-conceit supplied him with a happy expedient. He determined to take Scott's suggestion and to let this herring hang by its own head. In an incredibly short space of time he himself wrote all but one or two of the poems that compose the volume. This book is certainly one of the most perfect achievements of the kind in the language. The various poems of which it is composed purport to be written by Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, Hogg,<sup>2</sup> Coleridge, Southey, and Wilson. The reader should not be confused because this production is often compared with the *Rejected Addresses*. The two volumes are not to be compared. They are altogether different. The *Rejected Addresses* are parodies; the supposed contributions in *The Poetic Mirror* are forgeries, and, as such, actually imposed upon readers for a brief interval. A few stanzas are sufficient to illustrate the quality of the imitations.

[Scott]

#### WAT O' THE CLEUCH

##### Canto First

Wat o' the Cleuch came down through the dale,  
In helmet and hauberk of glistening mail;  
Full proudly he came on his berry-black steed,  
Caparisoned, belted for warrior deed.  
Oh, bold was the bearing, and brisk the career,  
And broad was the cuirass, and long was the spear,  
And tall was the plume that waved over the brow  
Of that dark reckless borderer, Wat o' the Cleuch.

His housing, the buck's hide, of rude massy fold,  
Was tasselled and tufted with trappings of gold;

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to Hogg's Works, page xxxvi.

<sup>2</sup> *The Gude Grey Katt*, Hogg's imitation of himself, is written in an ancient dialect, difficult to understand. A modernized version of the same, also written by Hogg, is published in Mrs. Garden's *Memoir*.

The herchman was stalworth his buckler that bore;  
 He had bowmen behind him and billmen before;  
 He had Bellenden, Thorleshope, Reddlefordgreen,  
 And Hab o' the Swire, and Jock of Poldean;  
 And Whitstone, and Halston, and hard-riding Hugh,  
 Were all at the back of bold Wat o' the Cleuch.

As Wat o' the Cleuch came down through the dale,  
 The hinds stood aghast and the maidens grew pale;  
 The ladies to casement and palisade ran,  
 The vassals to loop-hole and low barbican,  
 And saw the bold Borderers trooping along,  
 Each crooning his war-note or gathering-song:  
 Oh, many a rosy cheek changed its hue,  
 When sounded the slogan of Wat o' the Cleuch!

And there was kid from Cocket-dale,  
 And mutton from the banks of Kaile,  
 With head of ox, and ham of steer,  
 And rib of roe, and haunch of deer,  
 All placed before the mountaineer.

The shades of eve in softest hue  
 Began to tint the Cheviot blue;  
 But a darker, gloomier veil was wore  
 On the swarthy brows of Lammernore:  
 While in the vale stood these between  
 Dun Ruberslaw and Eildon green,  
 One coned with rock, one cleft in three,  
 Like ancient dome and monastery  
 That for due penance, praise, and shrift,  
 Their unassuming heads uplift,  
 In midst of mighty city's bound  
 With towers and ramparts circled round.

[Wordsworth]

#### THE STRANGER

Being a Further Portion of *The Recluse*, a Poem

Fair was the scene and wild—a lonely tarn  
 Lay bosomed in the hill; and it was calm  
 As face of slumbering childhood—yea, so calm  
 That magic mirror of the mountain reign  
 Was spread, that vision scarcely could discern  
 The water from the land, or rightly mark  
 The greensward patch, the hazel bush, the rock,  
 From those fair copies on the element.  
 The shadow from the substance—save that one  
 Was softer and more delicately green.

## THE FLYING TAILOR

Being a Further Extract from *The Recluse*, a Poem

If ever chance or choice thy footsteps lead  
 Into that green and flowery burial-ground  
 That compasseth with sweet and mournful smiles  
 The church of Grasmere, by the eastern gate,  
 Enter, and underneath a stunted yew,  
 Some three yards distant from the gravel-walk,  
 On the left-hand side, thou wilt espy a grave,  
 With unelaborate head-stone beautified,  
 Conspicuous 'mid the other stoneless heaps  
 'Neath which the children of the valley lie.  
 There pause, and with no common feelings read  
 This short inscription—"Here lies buried  
 The Flying Tailor, aged twenty-nine!"

[Coleridge]

## ISABELLE

Can there be a moon in heaven to-night,  
 That the hill and the grey cloud seem so light?  
 The air is whitened by some spell,  
 For there is no moon, I know it well;  
 On this third day the sages say  
 ('Tis wonderful how well they know)  
 The moon is journeying far away,  
 Bright somewhere in a heaven below.

It is a strange and lovely night,  
 A greyish pale, but not white!  
 Is it rain, or is it dew,  
 That falls so thick I see its hue?  
 In rays it follows, one, two, three,  
 Down the air so merrily,  
 Said Isabelle; so let it be!

Why does the Lady Isabelle  
 Sit in the damp and dewy dell,  
 Counting the racks of drizzly rain,  
 And how often the rail cries over again?  
 For she's harping, harping in the brake,  
 Craik, craik—Craik, craik—

The *Poetic Mirror* affords an opportunity to discuss that trait which, tho not of the highest order of artistic merit, was possessed by Hogg to an extent nearly approaching perfection, namely, imitation of literary style. From first to last the Ettrick Shepherd was a mimic. Just as a theatrical mimic often lacks the spark of genius that will make him a creative

actor, so Hogg lacked that genius that would have made him a great creative writer like Scott. His earliest ambition was, not to be a poet, but to be a poet like Burns. It was Scott's open and avowed imitation of the ancient ballads in the third volume of *The Minstrelsy* that led Hogg into a similar attempt, which resulted in *The Mountain Bard*. And, doubtless, it was in imitation of Scott that he produced *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* and *The Siege of Roxburgh*. Tho Hogg occasionally rose above the plane of imitation, it characterizes most of his work, prose as well as verse. It was because he mimiced so well that he deserves so high a place among writers, for he sometimes mimiced the life about him as well as the writings of others. His mimicry of real life is so perfect that it often becomes tedious, lacking, as it does, that art of omission which alone makes realism seem real and is at the same time artistic.

We know so little of just what Hogg read that we cannot say positively that here or there he intended to imitate just this or that. But, knowing his general tendency, one cannot escape the idea that he was familiar with DeFoe. *The Adventures of Captain John Locky* is so exactly like *Captain Singleton* that one could fancy that both sprang from the same brain; yet the fact that it is so far different that DeFoe might have written them both without laying himself open to the charge of repetition is testimony to the capital skill of Hogg's execution.

*Allan Gordon* might have fallen from the pen of DeFoe instead of *Robinson Crusoe*, and still have taken the world by storm. The hero goes north in a whaler which is caught in the ice-floe and lost. He alone escapes to have three years of strange adventures in the northern seas. The ingenuity he displays, the hair-breadth escapes, the touching companionship with a polar bear which he rears from a cub, above all, the naïve simplicity which makes one believe implicitly for the time being that he is reading a simple tale of fact and personal experience is all DeFoe, nothing more, nothing less. We can fancy that Hogg read *Crusoe* and said, "I will do that too", just as he actually said that he would write like Burns, when he first heard *Tam O' Shanter*. And he performed his task so skilfully that he is almost equal to his copy.

It is not the present writer's intention to belittle Hogg's work by harping upon this element of imitation. He firmly believes that Hogg's imitations are far better than Scott's

imitations. Doubtless the latter's failed as imitations just because his greater genius of personality would assert itself. While Hogg, on the other hand, unhampered by any ambition except what was prompted by the wish to do as well as another, succeeded better. In other words, Scott's literary task was on the highest plane and he reached its elevation; Hogg's was on a lower level, which he likewise traversed with unerring footsteps.

I have disclaimed the intention of belittling the literary excellence of the Ettrick Shepherd, and his achievements as an imitator may profitably be contrasted with his success in another field. A contemporary critic of estimation often emphasizes the assertion that a single poetic outburst constitutes a claim to be called a poet. If a single poem like "I wandered lonely as a cloud", is sufficient to establish Wordsworth's reputation as a poet, and who would deny the claim in spite of the fact that he did not always write up to this excellence, then *The Witch of Fife* or *Kilmeny* is sufficient to place Hogg among the elect. But, tho no poet, except, perhaps, Wordsworth, would gain more by selection exercised by a skilful editor, these two poems do not alone constitute Hogg's claim to true poetical creation. In one field he invariably rose above himself and became almost the equal of Burns. In his own day, and in ours, the songs of the Ettrick Shepherd were sung by the firesides of Yarrow. Close examination of his verse fully justifies the verdict of the rustic singers. An enthusiast need fear no contradiction to the assertion that Burns wrote nothing more beautiful than the following:

#### THE SKYLARK

Bird of the wilderness,  
Blithesome and cumberless,  
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea!  
Emblem of happiness,  
Blest is thy dwelling place—  
Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!

Wild is thy lay and loud,  
Far in the downy cloud,  
Love gives it energy, love gave it birth.  
Where, on thy dewy wing,  
Where art thou journeying?  
Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.



O'er fell and fountain sheen,  
 O'er moor and mountain green,  
 O'er the red streamer that heralds the day,  
 Over the cloudlet dim,  
 Over the rainbow's rim,  
 Musical cherub, soar, singing, away!

Then, when the gloaming comes,  
 Low in the heather blooms  
 Sweet will thy welcome and bed of love be!  
 Emblem of happiness,  
 Blest is thy dwelling place—  
 Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!

Without any desire to present an anthology of Hogg's songs, a few scattered stanzas are printed in succession to illustrate their diversity, and the music of his rhythm.

#### THE MOON WAS A-WANING

The moon was a-waning,  
 The tempest was over,  
 Fair was the maiden,  
 And fond was the lover;  
 But the snow was so deep  
 That his heart it grew weary,  
 And he sunk down to sleep  
 In the moorland so dreary.

#### BY A BUSH

By a bush on yonder brae,  
 Where the airy Bengier rises,  
 Sandy tun'd his artless lay;  
 Thus he sung the lea-lang day,  
 "Thou shalt ever be my theme,  
 Yarrow, winding down the hollow,  
 With thy bonny sister stream,  
 Sweeping through the broom so yellow.  
 On these banks thy waters lave,  
 Oft the warrior found a grave.

#### O, JEANIE, THERE'S NAETHING TO FEAR

Oh, my lassie, our joy to complete again,  
 Meet me again i' the gloaming, my dearie;  
 Low down in the dell let us meet again—  
 Oh, Jeanie, there's naething to fear ye!  
 Come, when the wee bat flits silent and eiry,  
 Come, when the pale face o' Nature looks weary;  
 Love be thy sure defense,  
 Beauty and innocence—  
 Oh, Jeanie, there's naething to fear ye!

## WHEN THE KYE COMES HAME

Then since all nature joins  
 In this love without alloy,  
 Oh, wha wad prove a traitor  
 To Nature's dearest joy?  
 Oh wha wad choose a crown,  
 Wi' its perils and its fame,  
 And *miss* his bonnie lassie  
 When the kye comes hame,  
     When the kye comes hame,  
     When the kye comes hame,  
 'Tween the gloaming and the mirk,  
 When the kye comes hame!

## A BOY'S SONG

Where the pools are bright and deep,  
 Where the grey trout lies asleep,  
 Up the river and o'er the lea,  
 That's the way for Billy and me.

## FAREWELL TO GLEN-SHALLOCH

Farewell to Glen-Shalloch,  
 A farewell forever;  
 Farewell to my wee cot  
 That stands by the river!  
 The fall is loud sounding  
 In voices that vary,  
 And the echoes surrounding  
 Lament with my Mary.

I saw her last night,  
 'Mid the rocks that enclose them,  
 With a child at her knee  
 And a child at her bosom:  
 I heard her sweet voice  
 'Mid the depth of my slumber,  
 And the song that she sung  
 Was of sorrow and cumber.

"Sleep sound, my sweet babe!  
 There is nought to alarm thee;  
 The sons of the valley  
 No power have to harm thee.  
 I'll sing thee to rest  
 In the balloch untrodden,  
 With a coronach sad  
 For the slain of Culloden."

## DONALD M'DONALD

My name it is Donald M'Donald,  
 I live in the Hielands sae grand;  
 I hae follow'd our banner, and will do,  
 Wherever my Maker has land.  
 When rankit amang the blue bonnets,  
 Nae danger can fear me ava;  
 I ken that my brethren around me  
 Are either to conquer or fa'.  
     Brogues an' brochen an' a',  
     Brochen an' brogues an' a';  
     An' is nae her very weel aff,  
     Wi' her brogues an' brochen an' a'?

## MOGGY AND ME

Oh wha are sae happy as me an' my Moggy?  
 Oh wha are sae happy as Moggy an' me?  
 We're baith turnin' auld, an' our walth is soon tauld,  
 But contentment bides aye in our cottage sae wee.  
 She toils a' the day when I'm out wi' the hirsels,  
 An' chants to the bairns while I sing on the brae;  
 An' aye her blithe smile welcomes me frae my toil,  
 When down the glen I come weary an' wae.

## POOR LITTLE JESSIE

Oh, what gart me greet when I parted wi' Willie,  
 While at his guid fortune ilk ane was so fain?  
 The neighbors upbraidit an' said it was silly,  
 When I was sae soon to see Willie again.  
 He gae me his hand as we gaed to the river,  
 For oh, he was aye a kind brother to me;  
 Right sair was my heart from my Willie to sever,  
 And saut was the dew-drop that smartit my e'e.

## CAMERON'S WELCOME HAME

Oh strike your harp, my Mary,  
 Its loudest, liveliest key,  
 An' join the sounding corrie  
 In its wild melody;  
 For burn, an' breeze, an' billow,  
 Their sangs are a' the same,  
 And every waving willow  
 Soughs "Cameron's welcome hame."

## MORNING

Human life is but a day;  
 Gay its morn, but short as gay;  
 Day of evil—day of sorrow!  
 Hope—even hope can paint no morrow.  
 Steeped in sloth or passions boiling,  
 Noon shall find thee faint and toiling:  
 Evening rears her mantle dreary;  
 Evening finds thee pale and weary.  
 Prospects blasted—aims misguided—  
 For the future ill provided—  
 Murmuring, worn, enfeebled, shaking—  
 Days of sorrow, nights of waking—  
 Yield thy soul unto the Giver;  
 Bow thy head, and sleep forever!  
 Rise, O rise, to work betake thee!  
 Wake thee, drowsy slumberer, wake thee!

What remains to be said of Hogg's verse may as well be said here. In 1817 he produced *Dramatic Tales*, in two volumes.<sup>3</sup> He was, however, quite ignorant of the practical details of the playwright's art, and, of course, could not produce an actable drama. In attempting this form of composition he bade good-bye to his poetical talents. The result is that his *Dramatic Tales* contain nothing over which it is worth while to pause.

In 1822 his poems were issued in four volumes, and in the same year, *The Royal Jubilee*, a masque commemorative of the coronation of George IV.<sup>4</sup> This masque, tho interesting in parts, is generally monotonous, and flattens out completely at the end. The best verses are the songs, one of which is as follows:

The day is past;  
 It was the last  
 Of suffering and of sorrow:  
 And o'er the men  
 Of northern glen  
 Arose a brighter morrow:

<sup>3</sup> Contents: *All-hallow Eve*, *Sir Anthony Moore*, *The Profligate Princess*, *The Haunted Glen*.

<sup>4</sup> Scott, at the cost of a good deal of trouble, procured Hogg an invitation to be present at the coronation. It afforded Scott the theme for one of his amusing stories to the effect that Hogg refused the invitation rather than forego the pleasures of St. Boswell's Fair. In fact, however, Hogg, who had made so many agricultural failures, would not risk the profits of a year by absenting himself from the principal annual market day.

The pibroch rang  
With border clang  
Along the hills of heather;  
And fresh and strong  
The thistle sprung  
That had begun to wither.

With the exception of a few songs and short poems, Hogg produced no more verse of consequence subsequent to the publication of *The Queen's Wake*. Volume I of *The Jacobite Relics* appeared in 1819 and Volume II in 1821. The collection is valuable only so far as it preserves the text of political songs that would otherwise have been lost. The voluminous notes by Hogg are oftentimes historically inaccurate, and are of no literary value. *Queen Hynde*, his longest composition in verse, is the most formless and monotonous. Hogg never possessed the ability to exercise sustained effort in verse. *The Queen's Wake* is, in reality, but a succession of short poems written at various times and loosely strung together. His three other long poems, *The Pilgrims of the Sun*, *Mador of the Moor*, and *Queen Hynde*, all show decided lack of inspiration, and have fallen into deserved obscurity. *Songs*, 1831, and *A Queer Book*, 1832, complete the list of volumes of verse published during the Shepherd's lifetime. They are both merely collections of poems that had been already published.

*The Poetic Mirror* was published in 1816, and in 1818 appeared the first of Hogg's important compositions in prose. In spite of the subsequent volumes of verse, Hogg may be considered from this date as a prose writer, an aspect that will be examined in a subsequent chapter.

## CHAPTER 7

### RELATIONS WITH BLACKWOOD

THO Hogg's relations with Mr. Blackwood extended over many years, it is thought advisable to give the narrative in connected form in one place. It has already been said that Hogg's acquaintance with his future publisher began when he met the latter in the capacity of one of Goldie's executors. Hogg writes as follows in the *Autobiography*:

From the time I gave up *The Spy* I had been planning with my friends to commence the publication of a magazine on a new plan, but for several years we only conversed about the utility of such a work without doing anything farther. At length, among others, I chanced to mention it to Mr. Thomas Pringle, when I found that he and his friends had a plan in contemplation of the same kind. We agreed to join our efforts and try to set it agoing; but, as I declined the editorship on account of residing mostly on my farm at a distance from town, it became a puzzling question who was the best qualified among our friends for that undertaking. We at length fixed on Mr. Gray as the fittest person for the principal department, and I mentioned the plan to Mr. Blackwood, who, to my astonishment, I found had likewise long been cherishing a plan of the same kind. He said he knew nothing about Pringle, and always had his eye on me as a principal assistant, but he would not begin the undertaking until he saw he could do it with effect. Finding him, however, disposed to encourage such a work, Pringle, at my suggestion, made out a plan in writing, with a list of his supporters, and sent it in a letter to me. I enclosed it in another and sent it to Mr. Blackwood, and not long after that period Pringle and he came to an arrangement about commencing the work while I was in the country. Thus I had the honour of being the beginner, and almost sole instigator of that celebrated work, *Blackwood's Magazine*; but from the time I heard that Pringle had taken in Cleghorn as a partner I declined all connection with it, farther than as an occasional contributor. I told him the connection would not likely last for a year, and insisted that he should break it at once, but to this proposal he would in nowise listen. As I had predicted, so it fell out, and much sooner than might have been expected. In the fourth month after the commencement of that work, I received a letter from Mr. Blackwood, soliciting my return to Edinburgh, and when I arrived there I found that he and his two redoubted editors had gone to loggerheads, and instead of arguing the matter face to face they were corresponding together at the rate of about a sheet an hour. Viewing this as a ridiculous mode of proceeding, I brought about two meetings between Mr. Blackwood and Mr. Pringle, and endeavored all that I could to bring them to a right understanding about the matter. A reconciliation was effected at that time and I returned again to the country. Soon, however, I heard that the flames of controversy, and proud opposition, had broken out between the

parties with greater fury than ever, and shortly after, that they had finally separated and the two champions gone over and enlisted under the banners of Mr. Constable, having left Mr. Blackwood to shift for himself, and carried over, as they pretended, their right to the magazine, with all their subscribers and contributors to the other side.

The account of the origin of Mr. Blackwood's publication as given above is true enough in the main, tho Hogg vastly magnifies the importance of the part played by himself. Doubtless some such idea did occur to him even some time before he made it public; and, when upon discovery he found that Blackwood already had the plan afoot, and Hogg was taken in as a principal contributor, it is easy to see how in later years he might have written this account in perfect good faith.

A letter from Hogg to Blackwood, dated Altrive Lake, August 12, 1817, more truly sets forth their literary relations at that time.

My hay harvest is but just commenced, and is this year large in proportion to the hands I have to work it. Next month the Highland cattle come, so that I cannot get to Edinburgh at present without incurring a loss, for which my literary labors, if they are as usual, would but ill remunerate me. I am greatly concerned about your magazine, but I have some dependence on your spirit not to let it drop or relax till your literary friends gather again about you. Wilson's papers, though not perfect, have a masterly cast about them. A little custom would make him the best periodical writer of the age—keep hold of him. I regret much that you have told me so little of your plan. If the name is to change, who is to be the editor, &c? For myself, I am doing nothing save working at hay, fishing, &c. Save two or three Hebrew melodies, I have not written a line since I left Edinburgh. I cannot leave the country just now. Crafty [Constable] always affirms that of all classes ever he had to do with the literary men are the worst and most ungrateful. I am very sorry to see this so often verified.

So much applies to the periodical that ran for six months before the publication known as *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* was finally started in its permanent form as a result of the thoro reorganization of the editorial staff. One of the first numbers contained an article that set all Edinburgh by the ears and well-nigh ruined the undertaking. This was the famous *Chaldee MS.* Tho this composition is not a part of the *Noctes Ambrosianae*, it is printed in Ferrier's edition of that work with full explanatory notes, to which the inquisitive reader is referred. In the preface Mr. Ferrier says that

he will clear up a bit of literary history that has hitherto been obscure; by which he means that he will indicate what parts of the *Chaldee MS* were written by Hogg.

One who is interested in the Ettrick Shepherd is more concerned with his relation to the paper than with the question as to what parts written by his hand actually remained in the finished draft as it was published. This composition was divided into chapter and verse, and written thruout in Biblical style. Hogg, as we have seen from *The Poetic Mirror*, was a master of literary forgery, and his imitation of the Bible was so accurate and spent upon such an unworthy quarrel that most people were out and out offended at it as a piece of sacrilege. But this profanity was not its only offense. In form it was like the Bible; in substance, a biting satire directed against all the Edinburgh writers and publishers who were in any way opposed to Mr. Blackwood and his friends.

Doubtless Hogg conceived the notion and wrote the first draft. He certainly did not know how good it was and neither expected it to receive such favor from Blackwood and his set, or such disfavor from the public. Before it appeared in print it was revised and enlarged to such an extent that the portions indicated by Mr. Ferrier as having been written by Hogg are by no means the greater part of the composition. *The Chaldee MS.* created such a storm, and to live it down required such a struggle on the part of Blackwood and his men, that they, including Hogg, were bound all the closer by the ties of adversity. (The article was withdrawn from subsequent issues and apologized for by the editors. It is now very rare except in reprints.)<sup>1</sup>

Between 1822 and 1835 a series of articles, the *Noctes Ambrosianae* (not all, however, by Wilson), was contributed to *Blackwood's Magazine*. They are too well known to need description. It is only fair to say that the most brilliant creation in this group of brilliants, who goes by the name of

<sup>1</sup>It is interesting to note the following paragraph that is in the 1832 edition of the *Autobiography*, but which is omitted from subsequent editions:

"So little had I intended giving offence by what appeared in the magazine, that I had written out a long continuation, of the manuscript, which I have by me till this day, in which I go over the painters, poets, lawyers, booksellers, magistrates, and ministers of Edinburgh, all in the same style; and with reference to the first part that was published, I might say of the latter as King Rehoboam said to the Elders of Israel, 'My little finger was thicker than my father's loins.' It took all the energy of Mr. Wilson and his friends, and some sharp remembrances from Sir Walter Scott, as well as a great deal of controversy and battling with Mr. Grieve, to prevent me from publishing the whole work as a large pamphlet, and putting my name to it."



the Ettrick Shepherd, is a burlesque of Hogg, not the man himself.

Hogg's treatment of this use of his name was curious. At times he took it as a good joke, at times it annoyed him immensely. The popularity it gave him and the flattery it contained ministered to his sense of vanity. Certain it is that he allowed the articles to appear month after month and made no protest. Yet Hogg was no drunkard and one can easily justify his anger over some of the debauches in which he is made to figure. March 28, 1828, Hogg writes to Blackwood as follows:

I am exceedingly disgusted with the last beastly *Noctes*, and as it is manifest that the old business of mocking and ridicule is again beginning, I have been earnestly advised by several of my best and dearest friends to let you hear from me in a way to which I have a great aversion. But if I do, believe me, it shall be free of all malice, and merely to clear my character of sentiments and actions which I detest, and which have proved highly detrimental to me.

Scott was evidently not one of the friends who advised Hogg to adopt a rash behaviour, as the following letter shows:

My dear Hogg:—I am very sorry to observe from the tenor of your letter that you have permitted the caricature in *Blackwood's Magazine* to sit so near your feelings; though I am not surprised that it should have given pain to Mrs. Hogg. Amends, or if you please revenge, is a natural wish of human nature when it receives these sorts of provocation, but in general it cannot be gratified without entailing much worse consequences than could possibly flow from the first injury. No human being who has common sense can possibly think otherwise of you than he did before—, after reading all the tirades of extravagant ridicule with which the article is filled. It is plain to me that the writer of the article neither thought of you as he has expressed himself, nor expected or desired the reader to do so. He only wished to give you momentary pain, and were I you I would not let him see that in this he has succeeded. To answer such an article seriously would be fighting with a shadow and throwing stones at moonshine. If a man says that I am guilty of some particular fact, I would vindicate myself if I could; but if he caricatures my person and depreciates my talents, I would content myself with thinking that the world will judge of my exterior and of my powers of composition by the evidence of their own eyes and of my works. I cannot as a lawyer and a friend advise you to go to law. A defense would be certainly set up upon the *Chaldee MS.*, and upon many passages in your own account of your own life, and your complaint of personality would be met with the proverb that "He who plays at bowls must meet with rubbers." As to knocking out of brains, that is talking *no how*; if you would knock any brains into a bookseller you would have my consent, but not to knock out any part of the portion with which heaven has endowed them.

I know the advice to be quiet under injury is hard to flesh and blood. But nevertheless, I give it under the firmest conviction that it is the best for your peace, happiness and credit. The public has shown their full sense of your original genius, and I think this unjust aggression and extravagant affectation of depreciating you will make no impression on their feelings. I would also distrust the opinions of those friends who urge you to hostilities. They may be over-zealous in your behalf and overlook the preservation of your ease and your comforts, like the brewer's man who pushed his guest into the boiling vat that he might be sure to give him drink enough, or they may be a little malicious and have no objection (either from personal motives or for the mere fun's sake) to egg on and encourage a quarrel. In all the literary quarrels of my time, and I have seen many, I remember none in which both parties did not come off with injured peace of mind and diminished reputation. It is as if a decent man was seen boxing in the street.

It is therefore my earnest advice to you to look on the whole matter with contempt, and never in one way or other take any notice of it. (Goldie's publication might with some people have a bad effect, because he certainly had reason to complain.) But this absurd piece of extravagance can have none—it leaves you, in every respect, the same James Hogg it found you, or if otherwise, it arms in your favor those generous feelings which revolt at seeing your parts and talents made the subject of ill-natured ridicule.

I am sure I feel for Mrs. Hogg on the occasion, because as an affectionate wife, I am sure she must feel hurt and angry on your behalf. But then she must as a woman of sense reconcile herself to the course most favorable to your peace of mind, your private fortunes and the safety of your person. . . . But if you come here agreeable to what is requested in the enclosed we will be most heartily glad to see you, and will consider what can be done in that part of the matter.

I have only to add that I myself, in similar circumstances, should take no notice of any piece of scurrilous railery which appeared anonymously in periodical publications, and that I should conceive my honor much more hurt in descending to such a contest than in neglecting or condemning the injury. Yours very truly,

W. SCOTT.

Abbotsford, Saturday.

Hogg was of a very forgivable disposition and his anger soon passed away. Says Mrs. Garden:

Among others, Mrs. Hogg felt deeply hurt at these representations, and, although her husband used to peruse them with merry laughter as each new number of *Maga* made its appearance, her heart used to quicken its beat and her gentle spirit was wounded, because her kind husband was, to her thinking, turned into heartless ridicule in these horrid *Noctes*. Occasionally and wisely she refused to read them.

For some years Hogg continued to contribute regularly to *Blackwood's Magazine*, and remained upon terms of friend-

ship with the editor, saving, perhaps, now and then a trivial exchange of temper. In 1832, however, they had a serious quarrel. In this year Hogg published his *Autobiography* again as introduction to *The Altrive Tales*. It contained the following passage which has been omitted from subsequent editions:

In the spring of 1829 I first mentioned the plan of *The Altrive Tales* to Mr. Blackwood in a letter. He said in answer that the publication of them would be playing a sure card if Mr. Lockhart would edit them. He and I waited on Mr. Lockhart subsequently at Chiefswood and proposed the plan to him. He said that he would cheerfully assist me both in the selection and the correction, but that it was altogether without a precedent for one author to publish an edition of the works of another while the latter was still alive, and better qualified than *any* other person to supervise the work. Blackwood then requested me to begin writing and arranging forthwith that we might begin publishing about the end of the year. But when the end of the year came he put me off until the next spring, and then desired me to continue my labors till November next, as I should still be making the work better, and would ultimately profit by so doing. Then when last November came he answered a letter of mine in very bad humor, stating that he would neither advance me money on the work that had laid a year unpublished, nor commence a new work in a time of such agitation, and that I *must not* think of it for another year at least.

I then began to suspect that the whole pretense had all along been only a blind to keep me from London, whither I had proposed going, and keep me entirely in his own power. So rather than offer the series to any other Scottish bookseller, I carried it at once to London, where it was cordially accepted on my own terms without the intervention or the assistance of anybody. It was not without the greatest reluctance that I left my family in the wilderness, but I had no alternative. It behooved me either to remain there and starve or try my success in the metropolis of the empire, where I could have the assistance of more than one friend on whose good taste and critical discernment I could implicitly rely.

The *Autobiography* also contains the following note concerning Blackwood's dealing:

I confess that there was a good deal of wrangling between Mr. Blackwood and me with regard to a hundred-pound bill of Messrs. Longman & Co.'s advanced on the credit of these works. When Mr. Blackwood came to be a sharer in them, and to find that he was likely to be a loser of that sum, or a great part of it, he caused me to make over a bill to him of the same amount, which he afterwards charged me with, and deducted from our subsequent transactions:—so that, as far as ever I could be made to understand the matter, after many letters and arguments, I never received into my own hand one penny for these two works. I do not accuse Mr. Blackwood of dishonesty: on the contrary, with all his faults,

I never saw anything but honor and integrity about him. But this was the fact. Messrs. Longman & Co. advanced me one hundred pounds on the credit of one or both of the works: I drew the money for the note, or rather I believe Mr. Blackwood drew it out of the bank for me. But he compelled me, whether I would or not, to grant him my promissory note for the same sum, and I was to have a moiety of the proceeds from both houses. The account was carried on against me till finally obliterated; but the proceeds I never heard of, and yet, on coming to London, I find that Messrs. Longman & Co. have not a copy of either of the works, nor have had any for a number of years. It is probable that they may have sold them off at a trade sale, and at a very cheap rate, too; but half of the edition was mine and they ought to have consulted me, or at least informed me of the transaction. It was because I had an implicit confidence in Blackwood's honor that I signed the bill, though I told him I could not comprehend it. The whole of that trifling business has to this day continued a complete mystery to me. I have told the plain truth, and if any of the parties can explain it away I shall be obliged to them. If the money should ever by any chance drop in, "better late than never" will be my salutation.

These and other expressions of like intent enraged Blackwood, and a serious quarrel followed. Its results can best be told by a few extracts from the correspondence of Christopher North.

Wilson writes offering to mediate between Hogg and Blackwood; after suggesting that all past differences be forgotten he continues:

But you have accused Mr. Blackwood in your correspondence with him, as I understand, of shabbiness, meanness, selfish motives, and almost dishonesty. In your memoir there is an allusion to some transaction about a bill which directly charges Mr. Blackwood with want of integrity. In that light it was received by a knave and fool in *Fraser's Magazine*, and on it was founded a charge of downright dishonesty against a perfectly honest and upright man. Now, my good sir, insinuation and accusation of this kind are quite another guess sort of matter from mere ebullitions of temper, and it is impossible that Mr. Blackwood can ever make up any quarrel with any man *who doubts his integrity*. It is your bounden duty to make amends to him on this subject. But even here I would not counsel *any apology*. I would say that it is your duty as an honest man to say fully and freely, and unequivocally, that you know Mr. Blackwood to be one, and in all his dealings with you has behaved as one.

Wilson goes on to say that Hogg shall not again be written up in the *Noctes* if Hogg objects. The next letter hints at what was Hogg's reply to the offer of mediation.

On considering its various contents, I feel that I can be of no use at the present in effecting a reconciliation between you and Mr. Blackwood.

If you never made any accusation of the kind I mentioned against Mr. Blackwood, then am I ignorant of the merits of the case altogether, and my interference is only an additional instance of the danger of voluntary counsel, with erroneous impressions of the relative situations of the parties. I proposed a plan of reconciliation, which seemed to me to make no unpleasant demand on either party, and which was extremely simple; but it would seem that I took for granted certain accusations or insinuations against Mr. Blackwood's character as a man of business that you never made.

The following extracts are from a letter to Mr. Grieve:

If Mr. Hogg puts his return as a writer to *Maga* on the ground that *Maga* suffers greatly from his absence from her pages, and that Mr. B. must be very desirous of his assistance, that will at once be a stumbling block in the way of settlement; for Mr. B., whether rightly or wrongly, will not make the admission. . . .

I wrote the *Noctes* to benefit and do honor to Mr. Hogg, much more than to benefit myself, and but for them he, with all his extraordinary powers, would not have been universally known as he now is; for poetical fame, as you well know, is fleeting and precarious. After more than a dozen years' acquaintance and delight in the *Noctes* the Shepherd, because he quarreled with Mr. Blackwood *on other grounds*, puts an end to them, which, by the by, he had no *right* to do. . . .

There are various other points to be attended to. The magazine *now* is the least *personal* periodical existing, and it will continue so. Now Mr. Hogg may wish to insert articles about London and so on that may be *extremely personal*. Mr. Blackwood could not take such articles. He *has himself* reason to be offended with Mr. Hogg's writing about himself, and could not consistently in like manner offend others. . . .

With respect to past quarrels, they should be at once forgotten by both parties and not a word said about them, except if Mr. Hogg has published anything reflecting on Mr. Blackwood's *integrity*. *I think he has.* That, therefore, must be done away with by the Shepherd in the magazine itself, but not in the way of *apology*, but in a manly manner, such as would do honor to himself and at once put down all the calumnies of others to which Mr. Blackwood has been unjustly exposed, especially in *Fraser's Magazine*. All abuse of Mr. Blackwood in that work, *as founded on his behavior to Mr. Hogg*, must, by Mr. Hogg, be put a stop to; for if he continues to write in *Fraser* and to allow those people to put into his mouth whatever they choose (and they hold him up to ridicule every month after a different manner from the *Noctes*!), their abuse of Mr. Blackwood will seem to be sanctioned by Mr. Hogg, and neutralize whatever he may say in *Maga*.

Mrs. Garden adds:

The result of these friendly negotiations may be gathered from the *Noctes* of May, 1834, in which there is a lively and most amusing description of the Shepherd's return to the bosom of his friends in the tent at the Fairy's Cleugh.

After so much has been said concerning this quarrel with the man who, next to Scott, was Hogg's best friend, it is interesting to note what the Shepherd wrote later, in the year of Mr. Blackwood's death.

I will be very sorry to object to any arrangement that so kind a friend has made manifestly for my benefit. It was what I wished and proposed last year, that all bygones should be bygones, and never once more mentioned. It is by far the best way of settling a difference when so many alternate kindnesses have passed between the parties. For, though Mr. Blackwood often hurt my literary pride, I have always confessed, and will confess to my dying day, that I knew no man who wished me better, or was more interested in my success.

## CHAPTER 8

### HOGG AS A PROSE WRITER

Tho Hogg is more notable as a prose writer than as a poet, his tales are not without many faults. In practice he did not always live up to the excellent description of what a short story should be, which opens *Gordon the Gypsy*. Hogg says:

It has been tritely, because truly said, that the boldest efforts of human imagination cannot exceed the romance of real life. The best written tale is not that which most resembles the ordinary chain of events and characters, but that which, by selecting and combining them, conceals those inconsistencies and deficiencies that leave, in real life, our sense of sight unsatisfied. An author delights his reader when he exhibits incidents distinctly and naturally according with moral justice; his portraits delight us when they resemble our fellow creatures, without too accurately tracing their moles and blemishes. This elegant delight is the breathing of a purer spirit within us that asserts its claim to a nobler and more perfect state; yet another, though an austerer kind of pleasure, arises when we consider how much of the divinity appears even in man's most erring state, and how much of "goodliness in evil."

Hogg's tales, with one or two exceptions, are all of a kind. He was essentially a short-story writer. He is at his best in stories that are short, and his long compositions are often but a succession of incidents loosely strung together. In fact, *The Adventures of George Cochran* originally appeared as a series of separate adventures in *The Spy*.

In his volumes of short stories appear many purely descriptive sketches which, however, are usually written in the narrative form. Description of a special kind was Hogg's particular forte; namely, the wild, rugged scenery of his native land, and the fierce commotion of the elements. The paper on *Storms*, now usually included in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, is a most splendid piece of writing.

However, Hogg's special contribution to Scottish literature is relative to the history of folklore tradition. He knew the tales of the Forest as Dickens knew the streets of London. Customs, beliefs, happenings, have been rescued from forgotten obscurity and reproduced in Hogg's writings by the multitude. Of fairies, he knew all, and his knowledge of ghosts was unlimited.

Hogg's manner of dealing with such matters was naïve. It must be borne in mind that the Ettrick Forest eighty years ago

was still isolated from the rest of the world. In that neighborhood lingered longest the oral tradition of the old balladry, and, like the ancient nation of Strathclyde, superstition found its last stronghold in the mountain fastnesses of Selkirkshire, ghost-haunted by the persecuted Covenanters. Hogg himself was a firm believer in many of the supernatural tales he wrote. It is due to this fact that they have such a convincing air of truth about them; and it was also due to this fact that it never occurred to Hogg that a rational explanation was needed. He told a ghost story just as he described a storm: the way it happened. The highest tribute to the excellence of his productions is that one cannot find it in one's heart to contradict the assumption.

One of the most characteristic of Hogg's short stories, which, tho not dealing with the supernatural, illustrates his method of telling either kind, is *The Long Pack*.

One afternoon a peddler, carrying on his back a pack, very large and very long, arrives at a farmhouse where no one is at home except a maid-servant. He insists upon staying all night as he is too tired to go on with his heavy pack. Thoroly frightened and dismayed, the maid tries every way to get rid of him, but without success. At last, however, the peddler agrees to seek lodgings elsewhere if she will allow him to leave the pack in the house over night. Later in the evening the domestic thinks that she sees the pack move. In terror she rouses one of the hinds who sleeps in an adjoining outhouse. He makes fun of her fears and, in order to convince her of her foolishness, discharges a musket at the pack. There is a shriek of pain, and the pack doubles up and tumbles on the floor. Then all is quiet. Upon examination the pack is found to contain a man who has just been shot dead. Later in the night an attack is made on the house by a large body of armed horsemen who are driven away by several persons who have been hastily summoned into the house for protection. In the morning it is found that some of the attacking party had returned to the scene of their defeat and had removed all outward signs of the fray.

This story is told so vividly that the reader is kept gasping to the end. So much the greater is his disappointment to find that there is no end. There was never any clue in fact as to who the man in the pack was—there is none in the story; there was, in fact, never any clue as to who the horse-



men were or what they wanted—nor is there any in the story. At the end one is sure that he has been reading an unmutilated transcript of fact, one of the events in life that happen but are never explained.

This story illustrates Hogg's method of telling whatever comes up. Whether it is the supernatural or real life with which he is dealing, he tells what occurred and never bothers himself with explanations. It must not be thought that he used this method to cover up careless plotting, or that he fell back upon the *deus ex machina* resolutions that disfigure the pages of Miss Edgeworth. Hogg's imagination was so vivid and so concrete, so accurate and so detailed, that he never introduces one of these unexplained climaxes accompanied by the least impression upon the reader's mind of unreality.

The way he manages to convey this impression of truth is very simple. His stories contain many phrases of this kind: "This is a true story", "An old woman of above ninety who had seen it with her own eyes", "The following is set forth as a fact, as I discovered in an old MS.", etc., etc. These phrases, however, are but the ear-marks of truth and are so artificial as often to be futile. Hogg really convinces his reader of the truth of the story by the multitude of artfully inserted details. No worm mark upon a fence-post is too small for his notice. Whenever there is occasion to doubt, Hogg floods the reader with a wave of proof. One cannot doubt in the face of so much evidence. And it would be an impossibility now to tell which of Hogg's tales are true and which are not.

The setting of most of Hogg's stories is his native forest, the loved Highlands, and Edinburgh, tho in some of his verse he wanders into imaginary scenes of imaginary lands. History as a background figures in only a few of them. His most successful historical attempt is *The Brounie of Bodsbeck* where Claverhouse's cruelty in the vale of Yarrow is made the theme. In *The Siege of Roxburgh* he is less successful, and in such stories as *The Bridal of Polmood* the historical characters are little more than names.

As a creator of original characters, Hogg can lay only doubtful claim. One of his novels, *The Three Perils of Woman*, has not been included in any of his collected works, but contains, in Cherry, the one character of Hogg's that bears the stamp of splendid creative imagination. His next

most brilliant success is the Fanatic, who, however, is rather a man insane than a human being. Hogg did, however, excel in the short character sketch. His bold outline pictures of from a single paragraph to a few pages cannot be excelled. In a few significant sentences he places before one the outline of a person, so vivid and individual, that he could be recognized in a crowd. Hogg's failure lies in the fact that, in general, his characters remain sketches to the end. They do not grow. He goes over and over the same outline; and at the end of the tale one knows the dramatis personae little better than he did at the end of the first chapter.

A few words may be said concerning the more notable of Hogg's works. Just why *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* should challenge comparison with *Old Mortality* is not apparent to the present writer. They are both tales of Covenanter persecution, and Claverhouse appears in each. Beyond this, however, there is no resemblance; in fact, in every other respect the two books are different. Soon after the *Brownie* was written Hogg called upon Scott; and the Shepherd relates in his *Autobiography* how he found Scott with lowering brow and in an ill-temper about the book. Several writers have attributed Scott's ill-temper to the fact that Hogg had encroached too closely upon his, Scott's, especial field of historical fiction. Such a notion, however, is wholly erroneous. Scott was a royalist in all his feelings and he drew the great Graham as a stern and relentless warrior but as a thoro gentleman. Hogg, on the other hand, portrays Clavers (he never uses a more respectful term) as a despicable brute, utterly without any trace of justice or humanity. It was for this view of the man's character that Scott's brow lowered and that he took the Shepherd to task.

The differences between the books are manifold. *The Brownie* is short in comparison with *Old Mortality*. It is not a tale, rounded out with many interests, various groups of characters, and an entertaining love story such as is found in *Old Mortality*. *The Brownie* is more like a modern short story, dealing with one group of peasant people, and almost with a single situation. Claverhouse alone is drawn from a different life and personally he is one of the minor characters. The story deals with the effects of his one brutal appearance.

This has been called the best story written about the Covenanters, and is certainly the best known of Hogg's stories.

It is also, perhaps, the most original, for, thruout all Hogg's mimicry there is the desire to vary enough not to lay himself open to the charge of forgery, except in *The Poetic Mirror*; and it is when such a desire finds full play that Hogg rises above the merit of a mere imitator in prose.

The characters are extremely well drawn. Walter Laidlaw, a farmer at Chapelhope, is bulky, simple-hearted, generous, and well knows his own good qualities, yet is free of vain conceit. Maron Linton is a simpering fool, nose-led by a profligate priest. Katharine, the sound-hearted, generous daughter, is less satisfactory, and only just escapes the charge of being colorless and insipid. Roy McPherson, with his peculiar dialect, his love of genealogy, and pride in Laidlaw who must be the chief of a clan because he, McPherson, knows no other man of the same name, is a creation that Scott himself need not have blushed for. The other characters are mere sketches, but they are drawn in bold outline and with striking vigor. The eccentric old domestic Nanny was said by Scott to be the best character Hogg ever painted, an observation that was certainly true at the time the book was written.

Few persons would lay the volume down without reading it to the end. Yet a second reading at once reveals the characteristic faults that the Shepherd never overcame. Sir Walter often accused Hogg of not taking pains enough; but the error was irremediable. Hogg wrote a tale just as he heard it or imagined that he had heard it and, tho the present story is open to objections, one is compelled to confess that it is true. One cannot understand how it is that, while Walter and his daughter are for a long time engaged in shielding two separate bands of Covenanters, both hiding in the same hills, each patron stealing from the same larder—why it is that they never stumbled on the same path or suspected the inclination of each other's minds. Hogg might well say, "Such was the tale as it was told to me", and the manner of telling forces the reader to acknowledge, "that there must be some explanation for it so happened".

*The Siege of Roxburgh* was originally published under the name of *The Three Perils of Man*. This volume was the next long tale to follow *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, to which it was in many respects inferior. With two exceptions (*The Confessions of a Fanatic* and *The Three Perils of Woman*) Hogg was, as has been said, essentially a short story writer. His

longer compositions, in the main, are but collections of episodes strung together on some loosely woven tangle of narrative, a method that is well illustrated by the structure of *The Queen's Wake*. *The Siege of Roxburgh* consists of but one situation. An English lady commands her lover to capture the castle and hold it till Christmas day to prove his love. The Scottish Princess bids Douglas recapture it—her hand is to be his reward if he is successful. The whole book is occupied with the succession of exciting attacks and counter attacks, marvelous escapes, and ingenious attempts. Each is well told in itself and they all hang together after a fashion; but there is no progression, no development, no character; and the tone is gruesome, cruel, and somewhat depressing from beginning to end. It is not a tale that one cares to read again or to recall when the last page is finished.

In 1823 Hogg published *The Three Perils of Woman*. Tho little known, it is in reality his best book. He calls the production a series of domestic tales, and such they are, not a continuous narrative. The first two volumes contain one tale; Love, Leasing, and Jealousy are the perils that occupy the third volume.

Agatha, or Gatty, Bell is a maiden of sixteen who falls desperately in love with a young man who is worthy in every respect to be her husband; but, thru some maidenly notion that it is a sin to be in love at such a tender age, she rebuffs him. She falls into a decline thru the self-imposed renunciation, and she is sent to Edinburgh, where, it is hoped, the change will restore her spirits. To cheer her up, her cousin Cherry, a naïve girl, full of spirits, guileless and artless as a flower, is sent to bear her company. M'Ion, Gatty's lover, is the most intimate friend of her brother Joseph, hence they are brought into daily contact. Thru misunderstanding after misunderstanding, M'Ion finally believes that Gatty, who is really almost dead from love, despises him. In the reaction from his despair he falls in love with Cherry, asks her to marry him, and is accepted. Then the truth of the whole situation comes out, Cherry renounces her lover in favor of Gatty, the two are married, and Cherry dies of a broken heart.

Soon afterward a change comes over Gatty. She grows daily worse, has no bodily ill, but has frequent premonitions of her death at a certain hour on a certain day. At that very hour, with all the family about her, she dies. She is

laid out for burial but in the night starts up and shows signs of life. Gradually she recovers her physical strength, but is wholly without the least trace of intellect. The situation is even worse, for her soul seems to have departed with her mind, and she remains in a state that Hogg constantly compares to that of a vegetable. In this condition she is removed to a mad-house where she remains for three years. In the meantime a boy is born to her who, however, is a splendid little fellow and quite unaffected by his mother's mysterious malady. Three years afterward, to the very day and hour, she is seized with a paroxysm that leaves her unconscious for some time. Then she slowly recovers and becomes her old self again in every respect. Hogg's merits and defects as a story writer are startlingly shown in this book. Once, in order to divert Gatty, a burly, hot-headed, wholly ridiculous cousin is introduced by her parents to be her suitor. On the day of his introduction he gets into a drunken frolic, and the story is interrupted interminably, in order to describe the three duels that emanate therefrom. The story is divided into eight chapters or "Circles". After Gatty is recovered and the story is done, comes the eighth circle which narrates how the ribald cousin marries a lewd woman whom he afterwards learns is with child by her seducer. The whole purpose of this disjointed and irrelevant piece of coarseness is set forth in the phrase below.

I have shown by a simple relation, all founded on literal facts, that by yielding to its [love's] fascinating sway she [woman] is exposed to the loss of life—the loss of reason—the loss of virtue, honor and happiness.

Had these portions been omitted there would have been left a tale of wonderful originality and brilliancy. One biographer of the Ettrick Shepherd charges him with the total lack of ability to draw a character or to portray the heroic. The double charge is sufficiently refuted by this story. Daniel Bell, the droll, simple-hearted father of the heroine is a true son of Scotland, worthy to rank as a creation beside Andrew Fairservice, Osbaldistone, or Ritchie Monoplies. Equal skill is shown in the portraiture of Cherry. Her renunciation, her assumed buoyancy of spirit which lasts till after the wedding of the pair to whom she has sacrificed her happiness, her subsequent collapse and death—these form a picture of heroism and pathos that one will read far to meet again. The ghastly

situation on the night after Agatha's death when she apparently comes back to life, not a human creature but a horrid thing possessed of a demon is unquestionably powerful, however revolting. At the same time, excepting the disagreeable concluding circle, the story of her recovery and the process by which she gradually learns the events of her three years' lapse from reason thru the means of her little child is a beautiful picture of gentle sweetness. Take it all in all, the book is what most of Hogg's stories are, the work of genius untrammelled by the rules of art.

*The Confessions of a Fanatic* is an ingenious book which is at once an example of the best and the worst of Hogg's eccentric manner. It is divided into three parts, each of which in turn bears a double character. The first part, or Editor's Narrative, is one of the most exciting stories the author ever wrote. The feeling is intense, the situations powerfully described, and one character, tho a monstrosity, is superlatively drawn. Over all the long list of peculiar incidents culminating in a mysterious murder, Hogg throws that supernatural veil that makes the events of another world seem real to the eyes of this. But, at the very end, when all seems in a fair way to a satisfactory explanation, the principal personage disappears and the narrative ends abruptly as things sometimes end in life—with no clue to the mystery.

This was a favorite device of Hogg's, apparently a part of his belief as to the best way to produce an impression of reality. Most of his stories of the supernatural show no evidence that he ever thought that the reader would ask for a rational explanation.

Part 2 of the volume under consideration consists of the Confessions proper, supposed to have been written by the Fanatic who so mysteriously disappeared at the end of the Editor's Narrative. This story is more prolix than the other, more of a psychological study (a form of treatise not at all suited to Hogg's powers). For a few pages the interest of the reader is very keen. Soon he gets a hint or two that enable him to piece out very all the rest of the narrative; but the author proceeds to re-narrate all the facts already introduced, but from a new point of view. Interest flags until a point is reached where the reader suddenly realizes the importance of a character who all along has seemed to be playing second

fiddle, but who in the end turns out to be the main figure of the book. At the last this figure disappears and the whole climax of Part 1 is repeated.

Part 3 is another editorial narrative, very brief, which tries to make the whole seem real but adds little that is new to the story. When all is said, what does the book amount to? One need not dwell here on the power of individual parts. The conception of the whole volume should engage our attention. The two great figures are the Fanatic and his double. The weakness, or strength, of the book, lies in the fact that the events are set forth as they occurred—for the time being there can be no doubt of that—but the author does not play the part of chorus. Did Stevenson get the idea of *Jekyll and Hyde* from this work of his countryman? The answer is idle, but at times one is tempted to believe that the whole situation of the latter story is there set down in the fullest detail. But we are not sure. Again, one is tempted to believe that the story contains nothing but a study of a particular case of insanity in which the double is the result of the fanatic's hallucinations; yet we are at once confronted by the ocular testimony of other people who had seen both persons at the same time. Or are we to take literally the belief that is attributed to the common folk of the neighborhood: that this person is actually the devil who compasseth all the earth to win one soul to hell? He possesses certain supernatural qualities, such as coming and going at will in opposition to the laws of nature; and he possesses the ghastly quality of being able to look into one's face, to read his mind completely, and as a result so to identify himself with that person that he loses his own outward resemblance and assumes the other's. In this way he goes about committing crimes in the other person's name.

The present writer acknowledges the wonderful power displayed in this book but hazards no opinion as to its meaning because he believes that none is correct. As will be recalled from a former chapter, Hogg was essentially a reporter, an imitator, with a dreamy sort of imagination, prolific, but not under control. If we judge from a careful study of Hogg's other work, we feel sure that Hogg heard this story, or dreamed it out in all its vividness of detail, and that he then set it down without having more than a partial idea himself

as to what it all meant. Powerful as it is, the reflection of the writer's own uncertainty constitutes its chief flaw as a work of art.

There is no continuity and no unity in *The Shepherd's Calendar*. It is merely a collection of short stories reprinted from *Blackwood's Magazine*. One exception is Number IV, *The School of Misfortune*, an essay whose tenor is suggested by the title and which foreshadows the *Lay Sermons*, written later in his career. Number XVIII, *Odd Characters*, is of a biographical nature and is mostly anecdotal. It contains the sketch of Will O'Phaup that has already been quoted in this volume. The other numbers of this score of sketches are stories of shepherd life in the Ettrick Forest.

Here, as elsewhere, Hogg shows but little imaginative creation in prose. Yet the stories are not devoid of characterization. The character drawing, however, is the work of an accurate copyist, not that of a creator. Hogg excels, in his short stories, always as a portrayer of situation, and in this respect his work is eminent to a degree. In *Mr. Adamson of Laverhope* the writer has come nearest to originating a demon in human shape which required the touch of genuine imagination to evolve it from whatever prototype may have passed under the Shepherd's observation. And the situation with which it ends—the open valley, the shepherds and their flocks, the sudden storm, the cloud-burst, deluge, and disaster—all this is portrayed in one grand burst of description which reminds one of that comprehension of the terrible force of nature that inspired Turner's picture of the Bass Rock.

*George Dobbin's Expedition to Hell* is noteworthy only because it illustrates in small compass Hogg's almost invariable method of dealing with the supernatural.

In 1832 Hogg planned the *Altrive Tales* in twelve volumes, which was to be a reprint of many of his stories together with some new ones. Thru the failure of the publisher only the first volume appeared, the principal contribution to which was *Captain John Locky*. A close comparison between *Captain Singleton* and *Captain Locky* would certainly be favorable to the latter. The method of each writer is the same. Neither rises above the grade of mere anecdotal literature. Hogg attempts to characterize the mad king of Sweden with only partial success. His hero, too, is constantly getting into dire



situations of peril from which he is always extricated by others, never by his own efforts. In this respect he falls below DeFoe's hero, tho the story is far above *Singleton* in interest.

Hogg's characteristic love of the supernatural crops out in the story in the mild form of mystery thrown over the birth of the hero. It is a mystery of such a nature that if the secret were known Locky's life would not be worth a pin's fee; and again and again he meets with a clue to his origin, only to be headed off to his own and the reader's disappointment.

Scott once said to Hogg that he never put enough time and trouble upon his stories. Hogg, like the great novelist whom he idolized, often found it difficult to end a tale. *Captain Locky* is a pitiful example. In the first place, the hero himself never learns the secret of his birth. In the second place, as if the solution of the mystery were an afterthought, Hogg reproduces a couple of letters received in response to an advertisement inserted in a newspaper by a curious person. Hogg did not stop to think that if the solution became known as he said it did it might just as easily have been made known to the captain at any previous time. To add to the chagrin of this anti-climax, the facts are narrated so briefly that all narrative interest is lost. Had Hogg ended with a little more care, the book would stand as high as any of DeFoe's, save always the immortal *Crusoe*.

Two other prose writings of Hogg's, not stories, however, require a word of notice.

Writes Lockhart of Hogg in the *Life of Scott*:

He died on the 21st of November, 1835; but it had been better for his fame had his end been of earlier date, for he did not follow his best benefactor until he had insulted his dust.<sup>1</sup>

Whoever reads Lockhart's attack on Hogg in *The Life* should read also *The Domestic Life and Manners of Sir Walter Scott*. The offensive passages that constitute the insult are as follows:

[After describing his last meeting with Sir Walter, Hogg says of his friend's subsequent condition.] He was described to me by one who saw him often, as exactly in the same state with a man mortally drunk, who could in no wise own or assist himself, the pressure of the abscess on the brain having apparently the same effect as the fumes of drunkenness.

<sup>1</sup> Page 760.

<sup>2</sup> Page 135.

Hogg elsewhere says that Scott never drank to excess; and,

X He had a clear head as well as a benevolent heart; was a good man; an anxiously kind husband; an indulgent parent, and a sincere, forgiving friend; a just judge and a punctual correspondent. I believe that he answered every letter sent to him, either from rich or poor, and generally not very shortly. Such is the man we have lost, and such a man we shall never see again. He was truly an extraordinary man—the greatest man in the world. What are kings and emperors compared with him? Dust and sand! And, unless when connected with literary men, the greater part of their names either not remembered at all or only remembered with detestation. But here is a name which, next to that of William Shakspeare, will descend with rapt admiration to all the ages of futurity. And is it not a proud boast for an old shepherd, that for thirty years he could call this man friend, and associate with him every day and hour that he chose.<sup>3</sup>

However ill-timed Hogg's figure of drunkenness, this passage shows that there was no intention to offend. The other offensive passage is more to be lamented.

Who was Lady Scott originally? I really wish anybody would tell me, for surely somebody must know. There is a veil of mystery hung over that dear lady's birth and parentage which I have been unable to see through or lift up; and there have been more lies told to me about it, and even published in all the papers of Britain, by those who *ought* to have known than ever was told about any woman that ever was born. I have, however, a few cogent reasons for believing that the present Sir Walter's grandfather was a nobleman of very high rank.

However one may interpret this, one may be sure that Hogg considered that he had said nothing especially disparaging about the character of Lady Scott. On the previous page he lauds her to the skies for her beauty, tenderness, and other excellent qualities. The quotation of a few further passages will make more clear the attitude of Hogg towards his patron and at the same time illustrate many details of his character.

I was indebted to him for the most happy and splendid piece of ballad poetry that I ever wrote. He said to me one day after dinner, "It was but very lately, Mr. Hogg, that I was drawn by our friend Kirkpatrick Sharpe to note the merits of your ballad *The Witch of Fife*. There never was such a thing written for such a genuine humorous humour, but why in the name of wonder did you suffer the gude auld man to be burnt skin and bone by the English at Carlisle? (for in the first and second editions that was the issue). I never saw a piece of such bad taste in all my life. What had the poor old carl done to deserve such a fate? Only taken a drappy o' drink too much, at another man's expense: which you and I have done often. It is a finale

<sup>3</sup> Page 118.

which I cannot bear, and you *must* bring off the old man, by some means or other, no matter how extravagant or ridiculous in such a ballad as yours; but by all means bring off the fine old fellow, for the present termination of the ballad is one I cannot brook." I went home and certainly brought off the old man with flying colors, which is by far the best part of the ballad. I never adopted a suggestion of his, either in prose or verse, which did not improve the subject.

Speaking of *The Spy*, Hogg says:

That work being long ago extinct, and only occasionally mentioned by myself, as a parent will sometimes mention the name of a dear, unfortunate, lost child, who has been forgotten by all the world beside.

[Scott read the proofs of *The Three Perils of Man*.] "Well, Mr. Hogg, I have read over your proofs with a great deal of pleasure, and, I confess, with some little portion of dread. In the first place, the meeting of the two princesses at Castle Weiry is excellent. I have not seen any modern thing more truly dramatic. The characters are strongly marked, old Peter Chisholme's in particular. Ah! man, what you might have made of that with a little more refinement, care, and patience! But it is always the same with you, just hurrying on from one vagary to another, without consistency or proper arrangements."

"Dear Mr. Scott, a man canna do the thing he canna do."

"Yes, but you can do it. Witness your poems where the arrangements are all perfect and complete; but in your prose works, with the exception of a few short tales, you seem to write merely by random, without once considering what you are going to write about."

"You are not often wrong, Mr. Scott, and you were never righter in your life than you are now, for when I write the first line of a tale or a novel, I know not what the second is to be, and it is the same way in every sentence throughout. When my tale is traditionary, the work is easy, as I then see my way before me, though the tradition be ever so short, but in all my prose works of imagination, knowing little of the world, I sail on without star or compass."

This brief memoir, which is so short that it can be read in an hour, has been quoted so fully, partly because of the publicity given to it by Lockhart, and partly because it is out of print and has never been reprinted. For the latter reason the following extracts from the *Lay Sermons* are here set down. This volume contains Hogg's only extensive attempt at the essay form of writing, and the style of it is interesting from comparison with his stories. The book is divided into eleven chapters as follows: Good Principles, Young Women, Good Breeding, Soldiers, To Young Men, Reason and Instinct, To Parents, Virtue the Only Source of Happiness, Marriage, Reviewers, and Deistical Reformers.

My design in all this is to reconcile my younger brethren of the human race to a state of old age to which they are all fast approach-

ing, and which appears terrible to them only because they have no experience of it.

Vice cannot be exhibited in detestable colours when the intention of the author is to make resistance meritorious. . . . Think, then, what mischief may be wrought in a youthful female mind by such pernicious representations of character. . . .

My first great injunction, then, is to Keep the Sabbath. Do not be seen flying about with gentlemen in gigs and carriages, nor walking and giggling in the fields; for each behaviour is lightsome, and highly disreputable. Attend Divine service once every Sunday at least, even though your minister should be a *bore* as too many of them are, repeating the same monotonous sentences from day to day, and from year to year. Still it is your duty to attend Divine worship, to join in praise and prayer with the community of Christians to whom you belong, and listen, reverently and attentively, to the word preached, as you know not whence a blessing may come, or when it may light.

But as attending on Divine service takes up but a small portion of the day, in directing your studies for the remainder of it I am somewhat at a loss. I cannot insist on your reading sermons, not even my own, for I never could do it myself, except Sterne's and Boston's, the two greatest opposites in nature. The Bible is by far the most inexhaustible book in the world, even laying aside its divine origin altogether. For its great antiquity, simplicity of narrative, splendour of poetry, and wise and holy injunctions, there is no work once to be compared with it; therefore, by all means, read your Bible, and attend to all ordinances of Christianity.

After advising in a general way not to introduce religion into general conversation, he says,

. . . . but, among friends, whose hearts and sentiments are known to each other, what can be so sweet or so advantageous as occasional conversation on the principles of our mutual belief, and the doctrines of grace and salvation?

I remember when I first entered into genteel society, which was not till after the year 1813, I thought it the easiest matter possible to gain the affection of every person of whatever age, and to live in habits of intimacy and friendship with them. Alas! how soon I found myself mistaken; for, to my astonishment, the very men with whom I had been so happy over night, who had crammed me with flattery more than I could hold—and it is a dish with which I am not very apt to be satiated—who had invited me to their houses, not on one day, but on every day that suited my convenience, would the next day, when I addressed them in the kindest and most affectionate way I was able, stare me in the face and shrink from the gloveless hand of the poor poet, without uttering a word.

In regard to dealing with children, he says:

Generosity would be the great virtue I should reward. Injustice, falsehood, cruelty, and ingratitude, would be almost the only crimes I

should punish. . . . I should promote in them the habits of industry, the bowels of kindness, and the virtues of patience and humility; and in every step of their progress I should teach them to love God for His goodness to the fallen race of Adam, to walk in his ways, and to understand his word.

Hogg was a great stickler for education; yet he says:

I know it will be regarded by many as total want of experience and discernment; but, as a pupil of nature, I must speak out my sentiments. I have a great aversion to college education; indeed, I hold it in utter contempt—and sorry am I that it should be regarded as necessary towards the entering on any of the learned professions; for why a young man who, by private tuition and diligence, has rendered himself, on examination, equal to or superior to any of the collegians, is not considered capable of performing the same duties, it is above my capacity to comprehend.

His reasons are summed up by the phrase,

I never saw any young man the better for it.

And he adds,

The whole parade of college education is a mere jumble of confusion.

In the breeding up your children in the way they should go, then, the first thing I most strenuously recommend is, the setting them a good example, and training them up in the fear, nurture, and admonition of the Lord. Teach them to know the value of a good education, and be grateful to those who are spending their time in the improvement of their minds and morals; to correct all the irregularities of their temper by the sweet influence of Christian Charity; to be respectful to their superiors, kind to their inferiors and equals, and benevolent to all mankind; and both the blessing of the Almighty, and the respect of their brethren of mankind, will accompany them all the days of their lives.

For upwards of twenty years I have mixed with all classes of society, and as I never knew to which I belonged, I have been perfectly free and at my ease in them all.

It is true the occupation of the legitimate reviewer is gone, and has devolved entirely on the editors of newspapers; while the old established reviews are merely a set of essays, such as these sermons of mine are.

It is no wonder it should be so, considering the woful want of candour, and miserable political party spirit, which have pervaded the whole of their lucubrations, from the highest to the lowest; and he who was long accounted the highest, was, in this respect, the worst of them all.

You, then, who handle the rod of literary correction, attend to one who has been both a reviewer and reviewed. Read and judge for your-

self; and if told that such and such works are exquisitely fine, and that everyone admires them, and that they are composed according to the very best of rules, then suspect a party spirit, and say not to yourself of your opponent in politics, "Now has mine enemy written a book." This is so decidedly the case in the present day that no criticism whatever is the least to be depended on. Why not, like a man of honour and candour, judge of the book solely by the effect it produces on yourself? and then you will rarely be wrong. . . . Your taste and imagination are exclusively your own, and therefore you should be ashamed either to laugh or cry, to abuse or to command, at the fiat of any save your own taste and judgement. . . .

If the author be but of their party in politics, and adhere a little to their dogmatic rules, there is nothing more required; they will point out to you, in perfect raptures, the finest and most brilliant passages. But if he be but of the adverse party, then "their enemy has written a book" and on him they fall tooth and nail. Of all the canting in the world there is none like the canting of criticism.

I speak not here of the delightful employment of giving up the mind and spirit to our Heavenly Father, of the soothing consolation of depending on superior strength, or of the rapturous heart; but I maintain that the worship of God by direct adoration, by reverence, or by devout meditation on His power, goodness and compassion is the natural result of our acquaintance with these divine perfections; and that if our reforming deists do not worship in sincerity as their Christian brethren do, what can we think but that their pretended knowledge is affectation, love of singularity, and pride of heart, and that they are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity.

## CHAPTER 9

### LAST YEARS

AS we have seen before, Hogg was never quite satisfied with his condition as a farmer. So now, when everything pointed directly towards a happy settlement for life at Altrive Lake, he must needs ruin himself again by embarking upon more expensive ventures.

In 1822 the Shepherd turned his cottage over to his father-in-law, and himself removed to the adjoining farm of Mt. Benger. In order to stock it he called in all his literary debts and proceeded to attempt with a thousand pounds a task that required thrice the amount. Ill luck seemed to follow him. During the next few years he sank all that he made in the new farm. Seven years later, when he left it, the market price of sheep had fallen to such an extent that he was left penniless. He says:

Altogether I find I lost upwards of two thousand pounds on Mt. Benger lease—respectable sum for an old shepherd to throw away.

Hogg as usual exercised his own stubborn will in regard to Mt. Benger. He leased it against the advice of his best friends, and in spite of the fact that it had ruined two skilful farmers in the preceding six years. Scott writes in his *Diary*, December 27, 1827:

I have a letter from James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, asking me to intercede with the Duke of Buccleugh about his farm. He took this burden upon himself without the advice of his best friends, and certainly contrary to mine. From the badness of the times it would have been poor speculation in any hands, especially in those of a man of letters, whose occupation as well as the society in which it involves him, are so different.

Hogg's life at Mt. Benger, however, was not without interest. He was busy at literary occupations during this period of seven years; and his house was *the* center of Yarrow hospitality.

Then the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Hogg was of the most liberal and genial kind. And it being known that the régime at Mt. Benger was according to the old Irish rhyme, "Hospitality, no formality, all reality", there was no lack of visitors to take advantage of it. As everyone was made welcome, whatever his errand or degree, we can well believe there were some who went merely to gratify curiosity.

There were many, however, of a different type. Good kind friends and literary acquaintances, not a few, gathered around the Shepherd's hospitable table. "In illustration of this", says the Rev. Henry Scott Riddell, "that on a day when a certain individual came to dine with the Shepherd and his family only, as they themselves expected, fourteen additional persons, before the day was done, dined in the house." . . . The day of the fourteen diners might be an extra chance day, but every morning, noon, and night, especially throughout the summer and autumn months, brought more or fewer to his house whom he loved to see. Those who came in carriages or on horseback, to call, or by appointment, were less difficult to deal with; because they came at regular hours; they had their refreshment and it was over; but those who haunted the hills and holms of Yarrow for their scenery, or its lakes and streams for their trout, came almost at all hours. Many, as well as the writer of this, have marvelled how Mrs. Hogg's patience became not oftentimes utterly exhausted; but if the lord of the little *bein ha'* was a poet whom nature, of her own free will, made generous, the lady was no less a philosopher versant in all the inexhaustible friendliness which supplies dry raiment to the wet, and food and rest to the weary, and the smile of welcome departed not from her countenance, nor the law of kindness from her tongue.

"To a friend", the Shepherd once said, "my bit hoose", looking back at it, "is e'now just like a bee-skep, fu' o' happy living creatures, an' nae doubt, like a bee-skep, it will have to cast some day when it can haud its inhabitants nae langer."<sup>1</sup>

Hogg was a firm believer in elementary education, and, to further it in his neighborhood, he established a little school upon his farm, and boarded the schoolmaster in his own house.

During Hogg's later years, both at Mt. Benger and after his return to Altrive Lake, he wrote many poems and short stories for the popular annuals of the day, some of which were edited by his personal friends. *The Anniversary* was edited by Allen Cunningham; others to which he contributed were *Friendship's Offering*, *The Forget-me-not*, *The Souvenir*, *The Book of the Seasons*, and *The Club-Book*.

In 1829 he returned from Mt. Benger to Altrive Lake, a sadder and a wiser man. But if Hogg was always meeting with financial disaster thru his own foolhardiness, he was also always quick to rise upon the crest of hope's wave. He was not long cast down but set about the task of redeeming his fortune thru his pen. He was at this time a regular contributor both to *Blackwood's* and *Fraser's Magazines*. It was soon after his return to Altrive Lake that he conceived the notion of the *Altrive Tales* which in turn led to his quarrel

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Garden, page 176.



with Mr. Blackwood. It was to find a publisher that he set out in 1832 for London. The visit was a continuous ovation to Hogg and did much to gratify his vanity if it did not fill his purse. S. C. Hall, in his *Retrospects of a Long Life*, thus speaks of Hogg's visit to the metropolis.

The visit of the Ettrick Shepherd to London took place in the year 1832. It is scarcely too much to say that the sensation he produced in literary circles may be likened to that which might have been created by the temporary presence of Ben Nevis on Blackheath. A striking sight it was to see the Shepherd fêted in aristocratic *salons*, mingling with the learned and polite of all grades—clumsily, but not rudely. He was rustic without being coarse; not attempting to ape the refinement to which he was unused; but seeming perfectly aware that all eyes were upon him, and accepting admiration as a right.

Almost enough has already been said about the projection of the *Altrive Tales*. Hogg set out having no doubt of his ability to find a publisher, tho the easily found publisher was one whose later career showed him to be unworthy of trust. It may here be noticed that Hogg was not only unsuspicious, but also generous to a fault. Tho Cochrane failed after the publication of the first volume of the *Altrive Tales*, Hogg trusted him again in 1835 with the bringing out of *The Tales of the Wars of Montrose*. The kind desire to help Cochrane by entrusting to him the publication of a work that promised success influenced Hogg. Cochrane failed again, but not till a short time after the Shepherd's death.

When volume one of the *Altrive Tales* appeared, all the reviewers commented in favorable terms upon the tale of *Captain John Locky*, but most of them concerned themselves chiefly with the new version of the *Memoir* which contained the passages so offensive to Mr. Blackwood.

At last adversity began to tell upon the lively spirit of the Ettrick Shepherd. He had returned to Altrive Lake before the news of Cochrane's failure. When it came he was considerably affected and ill for some time, tho he soon recovered his accustomed spirits. During the whole of the last two years of his life, however, he was far from well.

In 1832, soon after the death of Scott, appeared Hogg's brief life of the author of *Waverley*. It has already been discussed in detail, but it may be of interest to add a few words concerning the long friendship between these two men, especially from Scott's side. Hogg writes, with himself in mind,

Although so shy of his name and literary assistance, which, indeed, he would not grant to anyone, on any account, save to Lockhart, yet to poor men of literary merit, his purse strings were always open, as far as it was in his power to assist them.

Scott writes in his *Diary*, February 15, 1826:

Poor James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, came to advise with me about his affairs,—he is sinking under the times; having no assistance to give him, my advice, I fear, will be of little service. I am sorry for him, if that would help him, especially as, by his own account, a couple of hundred pounds would carry him through.

(May 14, 1826.) Hogg was here yesterday in danger from having obtained an accommodation of 100 pounds from Mr. Ballantyne, which he is now obliged to repay. I am unable to oblige the poor fellow, being obliged to borrow myself. But I long ago remonstrated against the transaction at all, and gave him 50 pounds out of my pocket to avoid granting the accommodation, but it did no good.

(February 3, 1827.) James Hogg writes that he is to lose his farm, on which he laid out, or rather threw away, the profits of all his publications.

(May 11, 1827.) Hogg called this morning to converse about getting him on the pecuniary list of The Royal Literary Society. Certainly he deserves it if genius and necessity could do so. But I do not belong to the society, nor do I propose to enter it as a coadjutor. I don't like your royal academies of this kind; they almost always fall into jobs, and the members are seldom those who do credit to the literature of a country. . . . Yet I wish sincerely to help poor Hogg, and have written to Lockhart about it.

Concerning another reference in the *Journal* to Hogg the editor writes the following:

As this is the last reference to the Ettrick Shepherd in the *Journal*, it may be noticed that Sir Walter, as late as March 23, 1832, was still desirous to promote Hogg's welfare. In writing from Naples he says, in reference to the Shepherd's social success in London, "I am glad Hogg has succeeded so well. I hope he will make hay while the sun shines; but he must be aware that the Lion of this season always becomes the Boar of the next. . . . I will subscribe the proper sum, *i.e.* what you think right, for Hogg, by all means; and I pray God keep farms and other absurd temptations likely to beset him out of his way. He has another chance for comfort if he will use common sense with his very considerable genius."

Hogg thus describes his last meeting with Sir Walter:

The last time I saw his loved and honored face was at the little inn on my own farm in the autumn of 1830. He sent me word that he was to pass on such a day, on his way from Drumlanrig Castle to Abbotsford, but he was sorry he could not call at Altrive to see Mrs. Hogg

and the bairns, it being so far off the way. I accordingly waited at the inn and handed him out of the carriage. His daughter was with him, but we left her at the inn, and walked slowly down the way as far as Mt. Benger Burn. . . . He leaned on my shoulder all the way, and did me the honour of saying that he never leaned on a firmer or a surer.

We talked of many things, past, present, and to come, but both his memory and outward calculation appeared to me then to be considerably decayed. I cannot tell what it was, but there was something in his manner that distressed me. He often changed the subject very abruptly, and he never laughed. He expressed the deepest concern for my welfare and success in life, more than I had ever heard him do before, and all mixed with sorrow for my misfortune. . . .

When I handed him into the coach that day, he said something to me which in the confusion of the parting I forgot; and though I tried to recollect the words the next minute I could not and never could again. It was something to the purport that it would be long ere he leaned so far on my shoulder again.

### Writes Mrs. Garden:

In April of 1835, he was in Edinburgh, and one still living can recall how he accompanied him from Gloucester Place, the residence of Professor Wilson, up to town, past the Queen Street Gardens, along George Street, and thence to the North Bridge. The Professor with two of his daughters convoyed the Shepherd, while his son and another walked on in front. Probably many a head was turned as the stately, picturesque figure of Christopher North, with his flowing yellow locks and his broad turned-over collar, passed along. Some, too, would say, "And that's the Ettrick Shepherd." James Hogg had once borne himself erect, and his step had been agile and light, and his figure had been familiar on Edinburgh streets for twenty years; but the Bard of *The Queen's Wake* was now past three score, and there were gray hairs where formerly there had been only golden brown. Still he walked with a firm step, pleased as he no doubt was, with the company of his loved Professor and the two handsome girls who accompanied him. The party separated near the University, and the Ettrick Shepherd was seen no more on Edinburgh streets.

"I<sup>2</sup> see, on looking at my note-book that I went to Altrive in June, 1835, and met with a very kind reception indeed. I showed Mr. Hogg several pieces of poetry which I had received from various authors for my intended publication, on one of which he made some pencil alteration.

"Next day he, Mr. Marshall, and I went to fish in St. Mary's Loch. The wind was from the east, high and very cold. Mr. Hogg had not fished long till he broke his rod. 'It is surely a salmon', he exclaimed, 'for he had sic a weight that he would not move after taking the hook, but lay just like a stone at the bottom.'

"Having thus lost his fishing rod he left us and went home. . . .

<sup>2</sup> This letter from Mr. Shearer, and the two following are quoted by Mrs. Garden.

Mr. Marshall and I arrived at Altrive about 4 o'clock. This was the last time your father fished, so that I was the last who had the honour of fishing with him.

"Sitting together on the sofa he played several fine old Scotch airs on the violin, and regretted much that when he should be no more, a good many of the old Scotch tunes would be lost, because no one could play them now but himself.

"You may recollect", writes the poet's only son, "that he was for ten years a shepherd at Blackhouse, and I think he always looked back on these ten years as the happiest of his life. In the month of July before his death, he asked me to accompany him, one fine day on horseback, up the heights that separate Douglas Burn from Traquair. I was surprised to see him mount on horseback, for he had not done so for some years previously, but I guessed as we wended our way up Douglas Burn, past the old tower and the farmhouse of Blackhouse, where he had spent so many happy days, that he was taking his last look of them. We rode up to the stones that mark the graves of the seven brethren, alluded to in the old ballad, at the top of Glen Burn; and he took a long look at all the scenery that had been so familiar to him in days gone by. We then returned home, and I was right in my surmise, for he never saw Blackhouse again.

"The following August he felt pretty well, and he and I went up to Birkhill on the twelfth, he having permission as usual from the Earl of Weymss to shoot over his property there. My father was stronger and able to take more exercise than I expected on that occasion, and I almost hoped that his life might be spared longer than he anticipated.

"On our return journey to Altrive we came down between the Lochs and Ettrick. On our way we came to an opening where we got a glimpse of the valley of Ettrick, and that spot where used to stand the house in which he was born, and the church. He sat down and remained without saying a word for about half an hour. I did not speak to him, for I felt that the thoughts that were passing through his mind, were probably too solemn to be disturbed. He rose, and, without saying a word we proceeded on our way home."

"I<sup>3</sup> visited him on the 22nd of October, and almost daily till the 19th November. After this I was in the room in which he died, never took off my clothes, but rested occasionally on a sofa—never got home till the Saturday after the funeral.

"Mr. Hogg went to the moors with his dog and gun as usual about the latter end of August, but this seems to have been a kind of a last effort to bear up under the progress of his malady. He gradually sank under languor and debility, and by the 20th of October was confined to bed. From this time he was only once out of the room in which he died. About this time he was attacked by severe hiccup, which scarcely left him when awake, till sensation was almost gone. This distressing symptom so harrowed him that he seldom after this could speak freely; but he complained of nothing else, and said if it were not the hiccup he would be quite well, and said 'it was a reproach to the faculty that they could not cure the hiccup.'

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Laidlaw.

"Though he knew he was in imminent danger, he was averse to giving information to his friends. On the 12th I wrote a short note for the *Glasgow Courier*, which was copied into several other newspapers. At this time his ideas were correct, but a lengthened detail seemed too fatiguing for his mind. He spoke none after the morning of the 17th, and at 12 noon on the 21st he ceased to breathe."

The following letter is from P. Boyd of Innerleithen:

Mr. Hogg, although apparently in good health, had been ailing for some years previous to his death, with water in the chest. When this was announced to him by his friend, Dr. W. Gray from India, a nephew of Mr. Hogg's, he seemed to laugh at the idea, and pronounced it impossible as one drop of water he never drank. Notwithstanding, he very shortly after had a consultation with some of the Edinburgh medical folks, who corroborated Dr. Gray's opinion. Mr. Hogg, on his return from town, called upon me in passing, and seemed somewhat depressed in spirits about his health. The Shepherd died of what the country folks call black jaundice, on the 21st of November, 1835, and was buried on the 27th in the church-yard of Ettrick, within a few hundred yards of Ettrick House, the place where he was born. It was a very imposing scene to see Professor Wilson standing at the grave of the Shepherd, after everyone else had left it, with his head uncovered, and his long hair waving in the wind, and the tears literally running in streams down his cheeks. A monument has been erected to the memory of Hogg by his poor wife. At this the good people of the Forest should feel ashamed. Mr. Hogg was confined to the house for some weeks and, if I recollect aright, was insensible some days previous to his death. He has left one son and four daughters; the son, as is more than probable you are aware, went out to a banking establishment in Bombay some two years ago. Mr. Hogg left a considerable library, which is still in the possession of Mrs. Hogg and family. With regard to the state of his mind at the time of his death I am unable to speak. I may mention, a week or two previous to his last illness, he spent a few days with me in angling in the Tweed; the last day he dined with me, the moment the tumblers were produced, he begged that I would not insist upon his taking more than one tumbler, as he felt much inclined to have a tumbler or two with his friend Cameron, of the inn, who had always been so kind to him, not infrequently having sent him home in a chaise, free of any charge whatever. The moment the tumbler was discussed we moved off to Cameron's; and, by way of putting off the time till the innkeeper returned from Peebles, where he had gone to settle some little business matter, we had a game at bagatelle; but no sooner had we commenced the game, than poor Hogg was seized with a most violent trembling. A glass of brandy was instantly got, and swallowed; still the trembling continued, until a second was got which produced the desired effect. At this moment the Yarrow carrier was passing the inn, on his way to Edinburgh, when Mr. Hogg called him in, and desired him to sit down till he would draw an order on the Commercial Bank for twenty pounds, as there was not a single penny in the house at

home. After various attempts he found it impossible even to sign his name and was, therefore, obliged to tell the carrier that he must of necessity defer drawing the order till next week. The carrier, however, took out his pocket book, and handed the Shepherd a five-pound note, which he said he could conveniently want till the next week, when the order would be cashed. A little before the gloaming, Mr. Hogg's caravan cart landed for him, which he instantly took possession of; but, before moving off, he shook hands with me, not at all in his usual way, and at the same time stated to me that a strong presentiment had come over his mind that we would never meet again. It was too true. I never again saw my old friend the Shepherd, with whom I had been intimately acquainted since the year 1802.

In 1824 Christopher North wrote:

My beloved Shepherd, some half century hence, your effigy will be seen on some bonny green knowe in the Forest, with its honest face looking across St. Mary's Loch, and up towards the Gray Mare's Tail, while by moonlight all your own fairies will weave a dance around its pedestal.

This prophecy is fulfilled. On June 28, 1860, was unveiled the huge statue of the Shepherd at the head of St. Mary's Loch, a monument that is now visible for miles in every direction. On July 28, 1898, the Edinburgh Border Counties association erected another monument to mark the site of the cottage in which Hogg was born; and upon the stone in Ettrick churchyard, erected by his wife, is the following inscription:

Here lie the mortal remains of James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, who was born at Ettrickhall in the year 1770, and died at Altrive Lake, the 21st day of November, 1835. This stone is erected as a tribute of affection by his widow, Margaret Hogg.

Of the monuments erected to the memory of this sweet singer none is so great, and let us hope that none is so lasting, as that represented by the fulfilment of his own earliest wish: that he should write songs that would still be sung in his native valley. Such is the case. The present writer cannot refrain from a personal anecdote. Once he arrived at Moffat, *en route* for St. Mary's Loch on a day when no coach departed, and he was carried over the mountains in a private conveyance. It was a cold day of driving rain not conducive to conversation. Scarcely a dozen sentences passed between him and the driver till that high wall on the left of Moffatdale was reached that still shows the print of "Claver's devil horse". It was pointed out by the driver, and he also related in detail

the narrative of the trip to Loch Skene taken by Scott in company with Hogg and the Laird of Rubislaw. At every turn the driver had a new tale of the Ettrick Shepherd, and now and then he sang one of his saddest songs to the mournful accompaniment of the rain. When we came in sight of Chapelhope he launched into a full description of what had once happened there. He had not gone far when I slipped a book from my pocket and let him see the title. I cannot repeat the enthusiastic Scotch phrases with which he praised the habit of carrying *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* as a traveling companion. He became more talkative than ever, seemed familiar with most of what Hogg had written, and warned me of many places in the neighborhood that I must not fail to visit.

This proved not to be a unique experience. As I went to and fro along the sister valleys, again and again I met with peasants who thought the Ettrick Shepherd's a name to conjure with. This fact is his great monument. Until recently it seemed as if in the outside world the name of Hogg, except to students of literature, would pass into oblivion along with that of Wilson; but the Forest still holds his fame secure.











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